Instructions

FOR THE

WHOLE YEAR.

Jane Ruddleston

PART IV.

FOR

SUNDAYS.

BEING

Practical Thoughts upon the GOSPELS of all the SUNDAYS, and Movable FEASTS, of the Year.

Printed in the Year 1698.

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Instructions

FOR

SUNDAYS.

First Sunday *of* Advent.

GOSPEL,

Luk: C. 21. V. 25. ends V. 33.

MEN *withering away for Fear and Expectation of those things, which shall come upon the whole World.* This Day begins the holy time of *Advent*; a time wherein the Church calls upon all the Faithfull, to prepare for the due Celebration of the great Festival of *Christmas*, now approaching. It is then we renew the Memory of Christ's Birth, and are to acknowledge the Infinite Mercy of our

Redemption. On that Mercy our Salvation depends; and that we may be truly ſenſible, how much it is our Intereſt to make an Advantage of it, the Church lays before us this Day the Terrors of the laſt and general Judgment, that being now ſeaſon'd with the Fear of God's Juſtice, we may be more ſollicitous, not only to adore, but in earneſt to lay hold of his Mercy; ſince 'tis only the Mercy of God can ſave us from the Severity of his Juſtice. This is the method propoſed by the wiſe Man: *The Fear of our Lord* (ſays he) *is the beginning of Wiſdom.* The way to be Wiſe to Eternity, is to begin with Fear. Teach us therefore, O God, this Day to fear thee; *Confige timore tuo carnes meas*; let my Fleſh be ſeiz'd, and tremble under the Apprehenſion of thy Judgments, that by the happy Effects of this ſeaſonable Fear, I may prevent my being one of that unhappy number, who living now fearleſs, will then begin to fear, when they ſhall ſee thy provok'd Juſtice falling upon them without hopes of Mercy.

'Tis now then we are, in thought, to conſider our ſelves in the very Circumſtances of the approaching Judgment, and ſee, if, from our imperfect Apprehenſion, we can imagine, what will then be the Terror of poor Souls, when they ſhall find all Nature, not as now, offering

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it ſelf to the Uſe and Satisfaction of Man, but joining with God, to take Revenge of Sin, when they ſhall ſee the Sun loſe its Light, the Moon grow dark, and the Stars to fall from Heaven, when they ſhall ſee themſelves in the Confuſion of Lightning, Thunder and Earthquakes, not now according to the uſual Courſe of Nature, but render'd as Terrible, as the Power and Anger of God can make them; when Whirlwinds and Storms of Fire ſhall purſue them in all their ſhelters, when the noiſe of the ſwelling Sea ſhall threaten a univerſal Flood; when the Earth ſhall be ſhaken from its Foundation, when all Nature ſhall be in a Convulſion, and no Place or Creature left to give relief, but wherever they flee from Terrors, it ſhall be only to meet new Terrors to confound them. If we can but remember what are the Effects of ordinary Thunder, Lightning, or Earthquakes, in the Frights they cauſe, we may gueſs ſomething, what will be the Confuſion of Man in this general Diſorder, when the Frame of the whole World ſhall be disjointed, and quite falling in pieces; we may eaſily imagine, how Man ſhall wither away for fear.

This Fear will be encreas'd with the expectation of what is yet to come; for tho' theſe are great Evils, yet every ſinner

will be ſenſible, of theſe being only a Preamble to greater. The Criminal brought to the Bar, and expecting the coming of the Judge, who is to pronounce his Doom, cannot but be ſtruck with Terror, when he hears the Noiſe and Feet of thoſe, who are making way before him; becauſe then he knows, his Cauſe and Crimes are to be laid open, and Sentence is to be pronounc'd againſt him. This is but a ſhadow of that unhappy State, in which all Sinners will be at this time: For when they ſee the World in this Diſorder, they will all have a Senſe, that the preſent Evils are only the Forerunners of their Judge, who is coming to take an Account of their whole Lives, of all their ſinful extravagancies, and will judge them according to their Works. Who can apprehend here what their Confuſion will then be! They are conſcious of their own unworthineſs; all their Sins ſtand before them; they have now a full and perfect View of all their Omiſſions and Neglects, of the Time they have loſt, of the Mercies ſlighted, of the Bleſſings they have abus'd: They know nothing can be hid from their Judge; they know what their Fate muſt be; they know now, what Eternity is; what it is, to be for Ever Baniſh'd from their God. All theſe Thoughts preſs upon them with ſo heavy a weight, that

that they have ſcarce a Senſe of the diſorder'd World; theſe Fears then are ſwallow'd up with greater: Nay, they rather deſire an encreaſe of the preſent Evils, wiſhing the Mountains wou'd fall upon them, and hide them from the Anger of their God, or cruſh them into their Primitive Nothing.

But this cannot be, they muſt be preſented before their Judge; and if they wither'd away before with Fear, under the Apprehenſion only of this ſad Appearance, what muſt their Condition be now, when they are placed in preſence of their Judge; when they ſhall ſee their God, a God indeed in Majeſty and Power, arm'd with terror againſt them, but without any glimpſe of Mercy for them, excepting that only, which has been formerly neglected by them: When they ſhall ſee in the Sacred Wounds of their Redeemer, how truly Sollicitous God has been for their ſalvation, who gave his only Son a Sacrifice for their Sins, and in the ſame Wounds ſhall now fully comprehend their own folly, blindneſs and ingratitude, who have either paſs'd by with contempt, or with obſtinacy reſiſted all theſe Expedients of Mercy. This will be ſuch Reproach of all their former Sloth and Iniquity, that the goodneſs and mercy of God which will be the comfort and life of the

Juſt, ſhall become the Torment of Sinners; ſo that they ſhall deſire to retire from it, and even without a Sentence, be willing to hide themſelves in Hell, rather than bear the tormenting Reproaches of their own Sins, heightned beyond all meaſure from the Sight of their God, and his Mercies. Sad and deſperate Condition of Souls, who have brought themſelves to that Unhappineſs, that Infinite Mercy and Goodneſs, and God himſelf, are become to them a Torment leſs tolerable than Hell it ſelf! But this is the effect of their own iniquity, and God's Juſtice: They had liv'd divided from God, they wou'd not hear his voice, nor regard his precepts; they choſe rather to follow their own Corruption, and the grateful ſollicitations of the Devil; thus they liv'd, and thus dying, their Souls become unchangeable, their Diſorders and Paſſions are harden'd in them, and having ſubjected themſelves to the Devil, they have him to command them for ever.

This will be the miſerable Portion of thoſe unhappy ones, who have liv'd here unmindful of their Duty, and their God, aggravated with ſo many frightful Circumſtances of Baniſhment from Heaven, of unſpeakable Torments, of Eternity, of an unchangeable State, and of endleſs Racks and Deſpair, that there is no Surprize

prize in the wonderful Effects it has had on thoſe, who have made it the Subject of their Serious Thoughts: No wonder, that the Heart of S. *Jerom*, in his Sollicitude, was ſeiz'd with the dread of this Day: No wonder, that S. *Auguſtin* made it his Prayer, to be tormented, burnt, cut in pieces here, that he might be ſpar'd hereafter: No wonder that ſo many Pious Chriſtians have retir'd from the Dangers of the World, hid themſelves in Caves and Deſerts, renounc'd all that is pleaſing on Earth, have choſe Priſons, the Sword, and Wild Beaſts, that they might eſcape the Terrors of this Day.

The greater Wonder is, that we who are yet behind, and ſay we believe this Judgment to come, that we muſt all be preſented before the Tribunal of Chriſt, be judg'd according to our Works, and that all the Workers of Iniquity, all who live careleſs of Salvation, ſhall be brought at length to this Confuſion, and be excluded for Ever from the Sight of God, with this Sentecne; Go you Curſed into Eternal Fire, there to be tormented with the Devil and his Angels for Ever, For Ever, as long as God ſhall be God, without hopes of relief or change: The greater wonder, I ſay, is, that we, who believe this, ſhou'd live almoſt as unconcern'd as if we believ'd it not; that we ſhou'd pre-

pare so little against that Day, but be as easy and forward in sinning, as if our danger of perishing everlastingly were more from Virtue than from Sin. Consider but the general Wickedness of the Christian World, how almost all forsake the Narrow Way of the Gospel, and become the Disciples and Admirers of a Corrupt World; how Interest and Pleasure are more powerful with them, than the Commands of God; how Fraud, Over-reaching, Prophaneness, Gluttony, Intemperance, Luxury, *&c.* are their profess'd Practices, and without Reproach; and then tell me, if it be not surprizing, to find this their general Method, who believe they are to render an Account of what they do, and that Sin will find its Punishment in Everlasting Flames.

That we may give no occasion to this wonder, we are to follow the Spirit of the Church, and imprint in our Minds a lively Sense of the general Judgment, that the Remembrance of this may be a perpetual Check to our Corrupt Inclinations, and a Restraint to our Passions; that this Fear may withdraw us from Sin, and spur us on, now in time, to seek for Mercy.

For this end, it won'd be a good practice every Morning in this Holy Time, at our first awaking, to suggest this truth;

Soul

Soul, remember thou art to be call'd to Judgment, there to give an Account of all thy Thoughts, Words and Works; there to receive Sentence, either of an Everlasting Banishment from Heaven, or of being with God for Ever. And this will make the better Impression in the Morning, if the same Thoughts close thy Eyes at Night.

Secondly, It will be the best Wisdom to prepare against the Terrors of the last Day, by calling our selves now to an Account; by judging our selves, that we may not be judg'd, and condemning our selves, that we may not be condemn'd, Nothing can Cancel the Old Account, but a sincere Repentance, a true Conversion of the Heart, accompanied with an humble acknowledgment of our offences. And they, who desire, that this Undertaking be no Mockery of themselves, and of God, must see what the Evils are, to which they are Subject, and now in earnest resolve, not to tollerate any thing in them, which at the Last Day, will be the object of God's Anger, or be fuel for everlasting Flames. If there be difficulty in this Work, let the Thoughts of Eternal Fire give Life to the Undertaking, and push on the Soul amidst the Charms of Sloth, and all other pleasing Delusions. If it be hard to resist the Corrupt Inclinations

tions of Nature, let the Question be put, Whether it be harder to deny our selves for the moment of this Life, or be tormented for Ever. And if the Thought of those Torments begins to lose its Sting, endeavour to sharpen it every Day, by letting the fire, thou now seest so often, be a continual remembrance of the Fire of Hell.

These may be some helps; but to do all to the purpose, 'tis thou, O Lord, must inspire us with a lively Sense of our Danger, and teach us to fear thy Judgments. Teach me now this Lesson, I beseech thee, O Jesus, and let the Memory of that last Day so possess my Soul, that I may have a continual dread upon me of all that is Sinful; teach me now to lay hold of the Mercy thou offer'st, for thus only can be prevented the Terrors of thy Justice. Now I desire to renounce all Sin, and make War against the Corruption of Nature and the World: This shall be my Business, as long as I live, that so, when thou call'st, I may be prepar'd to appear before thee, and have place in that happy number, who shall be invited with that Joyful Sentence; Come you blessed of my Father, and possess the Kingdom, which has been prepared for you.

Second Sunday *of* Advent.

GOSPEL.

Mat. C. 11. V. 2. ends V. 10.

JOhn *in Chains.* S. *John Baptiſt* was ſent to prepare the Way of Chriſt before him: And we being now in a time, wherein we are to prepare for the great Solemnity, we Yearly Celebrate of Chriſt coming into the World, to undertake the Work of our Redemption, the Church propoſes to us in this Goſpel the Example of S. *John*, and of S. *John* in Priſon, that from him we may learn the beſt Preparation, and moſt ſuitable to this time. The End of Chriſt's coming into this World, was to ſuffer; the Baptiſt is ſent to prepare his way, and he is preſented to us this Day in Suffering: And is not this to teach us, that as many as deſire to prepare to meet their Lord, and receive the Fruit of his Comming, muſt learn to ſuffer; that ſo they may be fitted to Communicate with the ſufferings of Chriſt, and, in the way, he has taught, have a part in his Redemption? Let us therefore this Day learn, how we are to ſuffer.

Thoſe, who believe no Life to come, have no other meaſure of things, but with Reſpect to this Life, and ſo they make every

very thing the Object of their Desires or Aversion, as it is agreeable or disagreeable to their present State. They approve Pleasure, Liberty, and Human Greatness, and under these Enjoyments think themselves happy, because these raise them in the Opinion of this World: They have an Abhorrence of all kind of Sufferings; because this depriving them of what the World esteems, and lessening them in the Eyes of Men, they hence esteem themselves miserable. This is the Judgment of Sense; and such Men are call'd by the Apostle Sensual, or Carnal Men; because they judge of every thing by the Senses.

But as for those, who truly desire to be Disciples of Christ, they proceed upon very different Principles: They have a Faith of a Life to come, and believe it their great Business of this Life, to provide for Happiness in a Future State. Hence they measure every thing here, not by any Agreeableness to Sense, or by the common Opinion of Men, but by Faith only, even that Faith, which is taught them by Christ; and by this Rule, as far as every thing of this Life contributes to the gaining that which is Eternal, or is contrary, or a Hindrance to it; so they judge it to be Good, Evil, or Dangerous.

Upon

Upon this Principle, the Judgment they make of all kind of Sufferings, is different from the World. They conſider the Suffering, of this Life, as a proper Means to diſengage their Hearts from all Immoderate Love of Creatures, and of the World: And this Love being that which puts them moſt in danger of a Miſcarriage, as to Everlaſting Happineſs, they ſee ſuch an Advantage in Suffering as even to find Comfort under it, whilſt the World judges them miſerable. Again, they believe all Suffering whatever to be the Appointment of God, and that it is his Will, they ſhould drink of the Bitter Cup, that is put into their Hands, and carry whatever part of the Croſs is laid upon their Shoulders: They believe again, the moſt effectual Means for obtaining future Happineſs, is a ready Submiſſion to the Will of God; and therefore, under all the Uneaſineſs of Suffering, they have this Comfort of Spirit to allay the Bitterneſs of Senſe, that they are in a way to the Poſſeſſion of God, their moſt deſirable Good; for the obtaining which, all Loſs muſt be eſteem'd Gain.

They conſider again, there is no Poſſibility of their Lot being with the Bleſſed, but by the Help of God's Grace; and then being taught, that God has regard to thoſe who are in Affliction, undertakes their Protection

Protection, and hears their Prayer: They look on their Trouble, if submitted to with Patience, as a Means of obtaining that Grace, which must be their help to Life Eternal: In this Consideration they see an Advantage in their Suffering, and know how to rejoice in this Hope, whilst the World is pitying their Misfortune.

They consider again their danger of being excluded Heaven can come from nothing, but their Sins; and being assur'd, the Afflictions of this Life, suffer'd with an Humble Spirit, are the most effectual Means for obtaining Mercy and Pardon; that suffering with Christ, is the surest way of partaking of the effect of Christ's Sufferings, and of reigning with him; they find something more valuable in Affliction, than in all Worldly Happiness; and not judging it by Sense, but by Faith, esteem it according to the value of that Purchase, which is offer'd for it.

From these and such other Principles of Faith, Reason receiving its Direction, the Faithful Christian learns how to suffer, and positively judges it reasonable to suffer whatever God appoints for him; nay, that he should not act accordingly to Christian Reason, if he did not submit to it with Patience and Comfort. And this is the Method of his Reasoning: Being happy in the Possession of God, is the

End

End of my very Being, 'tis the End for which I was Born into this World; and ought I not then to rejoice, when I am in the ſureſt way of coming to this End? Can I be in earneſt, in deſiring Heaven, and not be ſatisfied, when I am in the way, that leads to it? There are many Difficulties and Dangers in this way, which hazard a Miſcarriage; and is it not reaſonable for me to be comforted, when I ſee the Difficulties diminiſhed, and the Dangers leſſen'd? If I ſee Eternal Evils threatens, and may be ſhelter'd againſt their Stroke, by ſubmitting to ſome Temporal Inconvenience, which cannot poſſibly laſt long, would it not be reaſonable to compound on theſe Terms? Theſe are ſo reaſonable Concluſions from the receiv'd Principles of Chriſtianity, that there is no acting againſt them, without doing Violence to Reaſon or Faith.

Wherefore the good Chriſtian, tho' his Senſes be as Quick, and he feels as much as another, yet he looks beyond this; and where Faith informs him, that the Suffering of Senſe is available to an Eternal Good, he gives this Light to Reaſon, and ſo gives a Preference to things, that are ſerviceable to the great Concern, and eſteems not that a Misfortune, which opens a way to Bliſs.

Hence

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Hence in time of Affliction, he is not anxiously Sollicitous to enquire into the Causes, why Providence should thus order the Deposition of Things; neither in favour of his own Fears, does he conclude God's Anger to be provok'd against him. His only settled Thought is, to make a right use of his Suffering; because he is convinc'd, this will be to his Advantage, whatever the reason be, for which God is pleas'd thus to visit him: For should it be the Effect of God's Displeasure, he knows, an humble Submission to his Scourge, is that which will most effectually move him to Mercy, and make the best Atonement for whatever Provocation he has given.

Wherefore banishing from his Thoughts, in the best manner he can, all kind of Sollicitous and Disquieting Amusements, he considers his great Misfortune here, is, that he is separated from God, and in Danger of being for ever separated from him. No Earthly Troubles can have any Proportion with this; and if the bearing these may be a help, in uniting him to God, he thinks this a sufficient Reason for his submitting and embracing them with a chearful Heart.

And if the Soul at any time seems to sink under any Darkness or Oppression, then he endeavours to comfort her with the Thoughts of that Eternal Weight of Glory,

Glory, which is prepar'd for thoſe that overcome; he lays before her the Shortneſs of this Life, and bids her compare its Sufferings with the Reward, and with the endleſs Sufferings of the Life to come: He preſents to her S. *John* in Chains, *Peter* in Priſon, *Paul* in Perſecution, the Martyrs on the Rak, Confeſſors in Baniſhment, Ermits in the Deſart, and infinite Numbers of Pious Chriſtians, who, like *Job*, have ſuffer'd all the Difficulties of this Life, in the loſs of Goods, Health, Friends, Liberty and Life, and with the Apoſtle, even rejoic'd in their Tribulation, in Expectation of the Promiſes: Then he demands of her, Art thou better than theſe? If Heaven was worth all their Suffering, is it not worth thine? Be ſubject therefore to thy God, let him Command, do thou Obey, and let it be thy Comfort to do his Will, let it be thy Satisfaction, to be in the Way to Happineſs.

Thoſe Chriſtians, who govern by theſe Principles, have reaſon to hope well, as to their future State; becauſe, having almoſt every Day ſomething to ſuffer, they have every Day Opportunity of making ſome advance towards Bliſs. And how unhappy are thoſe, who learn not this Leſſon, which ought to be practis'd every Day, but, by their Impatience, even then loſe Ground, when they

they are call'd upon, to approch towards Heaven! Help us in this Point, O Jesus, and since it is so ordain'd, that by many Tribulations we must enter into Happiness, teach us to make a right use of what ever thou sendest; teach us to suffer with Patience; thou hast taught us, 'tis true, by thy Word, thou hast taught us by thy Example; but remember, I beseech thee, our great Weakness, and have Compassion: Pardon our past Failings, and so strengthen us now by thy Grace, that by suffering for the future, with an Humble and Resign'd Spirit, we may thus give proof of our being, what we profess, thy Disciples.

Third Sunday *of* Advent.

GOSPEL,

S. *John* 1. V. 19. ends V. 28.

HE *confess'd, and denied it not; and he confess'd, that I am not Christ.* This is the Answer of S. *John Baptist* to the *Jews*, enquiring of him, if he was the Messias.

The whole time of *Advent*, ought to be a Preparation of Christians for Celebrating the Festival of the Birth of Christ. God then humbled himself for Man, and Man cannot better prepare for the due acknowledgment of this Mercy, than by sincerely

ſincerely humbling himſelf before God: For this end, the Church propoſes this Day the Example of the *Baptiſt*, who, by his Auſterity, Preaching, and the Adminiſtration of a New Baptiſm, having given ſufficient occaſion to the *Jews* of ſuppoſing him to be the Meſſias, and being now queſtioned upon the Point, poſitively denies it, takes no Advantage of their Miſtakes, and owns no more, than he is oblig'd to by the force of their demands, in doing right to Truth.

This Spirit of Humility muſt be our Patern in the Preparation we make. If Chriſt humbled himſelf, we cannot be his Diſciples, but by a like Humilily. We may come to ſome part of this, if we ask every one, of our ſelves, the Queſtion put to S. *John*; *Tu quis es? Who art thou? Quid dicis de teipſo? What ſay'ſt thou of thy ſelf?* For what can we anſwer? If we look into our ſelves, and there ſee the Uncertainty and Darkneſs of our Underſtanding, the Perverſeneſs of our Will, the Corruption of our Affections, the Blindneſs of our Paſſions: If we conſider our Weakneſs, in the little we can do, of all the Good we propoſe; our Ingratitude, in abuſing the infinite Bleſſings of Heaven; our Unreaſonableneſs, in acting contrary to what we believe; in providing more for this Life, than for that, which is Eternal;

nal; in our daily Sollicitude for things of the leaſt Concern, and neglecting the greater; if we number all our Sins, which are the daily effects of this our Weakneſs and Corruption; what can we anſwer to the Queſtion propos'd; but that we are, of all Creatures, the moſt unhappy; that we deſerve nothing, but Contempt, Reproach and Puniſhment?

Then, if we make but one reflection farther, and ſee, notwithſtanding all this almoſt infinite Miſery, how proud we are of our ſelves, how eager of Eſteem and Love, how much we labour to magnifie this Contemptible Clay, this ſinful Duſt; that this is the general Buſineſs of our Thoughts, Money, and Time; that to this we turn whatever we receive from God; this is ſo great an exageration of our Miſery, that if our Neceſſities, and great Poverty, do not work in us a true Humility, the Conſideration of our Pride, at leaſt, cannot fail of humbling us.

By a due Reflection upon theſe Particulars, and thus making an Antidote of the Poyſon, we may come ſo far, at leaſt, as to conclude, there are Reaſons enough to oblige us to that Humility, to which the Church this Day calls us; and that if this be a proper Means of preparing us for the Benefits of Chriſt's Nativity. it muſt be our want of thinking, if we are found unprepar'd. But

But however, it is not thinking only will do the Work; but we muſt purſue our Thoughts with Induſtrious and Watchful Endeavours, for ſuppreſſing the uſual Effects of Pride, which otherwiſe, being a ſubtle Evil, will be often breaking forth, and when all other Avenues are ſecur'd, will make an Advantage of Humility it ſelf, and perſuade the Chriſtian to be proud of being Humble. A Watch therefore muſt be ſet to obſerve all its Motions, and ſome particular Reſolutions taken,

As Firſt, From the Example of the *Baptiſt*, not to value our ſelves, according to the miſtaken Opinion which others have of us. 'Tis eaſy for ſuch as are Cautious, by an Artificial Management, to raiſe an eſteem in thoſe, whoſe charity makes them judge the whole man to be proportion'd to that ſide, which is ever ſet next them; this gains their Applauſe, and becomes a Temptation to thoſe whom they commend, of meaſuring themſelves from ſuch undeſigning Flatteries. Here then is to be the Chriſtians Care, to look farther than they do, and by caſting his eye upon his whole ſelf, to put all his Infirmities, which are known to him, into the Ballance againſt their Praiſes; and then ſee, if he has any reaſon to be proud; eſpecially, when he muſt confeſs, that

that these are his own proper Stock, and that as to whatever is commendable in him, it is all the gift of God, and the praise due to him: Then if he considers, how unworthy he is of all such blessings, he will find reasons to adore the goodness of the Giver, and to plant a seasonable Humility upon that Stock, where Pride was upon the start, and just shooting forth.

Secondly, to disown with positiveness all mistaken Commendations; and yet not in such a manner, as by endeavouring to be thought sincere, to retain the greatest part of the honour design'd him.

Thirdly, Not so to renounce false Characters or Titles, as to substitute others in their place, which are true: For tho' here be Truth in the Case, yet 'tis such, as is more for the Advantage of Pride, than it could have from their Mistakes, which tho' Pleasing for the present, cannot last, when it is seen to be nothing but Smoke.

Fourthly, not to be forward in acknowledging in publick, even the gifts receiv'd from God, farther then is necessary for doing right to Truth; and then so to do it, that the Praise may be given to God, and Man humbled in the confession of his unworthiness in respect of such Favours. So far from the Example of St. *John*:

But

But becauſe Man is many more ways in danger of Pride; therefore,

Fifthly, He is to be careful, not to entertain Contemptible thoughts of others, upon any real or ſuppos'd Advantages in himſelf, whether of Nature, Fortune, or Grace; but to conſider himſelf in them, whom he is inclin'd to undervalue, and ſee in them, what he would be, did not the Hand of Mercy make the diſtinction.

Sixthly, Not with Anxiety to diſquiet himſelf upon his experienc'd Infirmities, or accidental Occaſions of Abjection or Diſ-eſteem: For that ſuch Trouble is the Effect of Pride; whilſt true Humility, ſubmits with Patience to all manner of Trouble; quietly, but ſtrongly, labours to amend; and while earneſt for help, yet with the ſame quiet, waits God's Time and Pleaſure.

Seventhly, Not to yield to voluntary Diſturbance, upon being Reprov'd, or upon real or ſuppos'd Contempts: Becauſe this Diſturbance has Pride at the Root; and true Humility, being ever ſenſible of its unworthineſs, acknowledges the Evil it meets, to be much leſs than it deſerves.

Eighthly, Not to be too eager in maintaining his Opinion in indifferent matters, nor be much concern'd when contradicted; becauſe Poſitiveneſs, Stiffneſs, and a Paſſionate Concern, are the Fruit of

Pride; whereas the Victory and Triumph of Humility is in yielding; especially where Justice and Necessary Truths do not oblige to their defence.

Ninthly, Not to engage in angry or peevish Quarrels; because Pride Produces Passion, and the Spirit of Humility studies Peace, chusing rather to overcome by Suffering with Meekness, than to maintain an unnecessary Cause by Contention.

Lastly, To avoid all manner of Affectation, whether in Words or Gesture, and observe Moderation in whatever belongs to Dressing, Table, Furniture or State: For if a Christian knows himself a Sinner, and in this sees Contempt and Punishment his due, Humility will be regulated by this Justice; and it must be Pride, that is industrious in seeking Honour and Greatness for that, which deserves it not, but is wholly unworthy of all such Courting. Here then the Christian is to see, that under the cover of consulting Decency, and the Mode, he flatters not those Inclinations of Pride, which lead him contrary to the Gospel, and put him upon pleasing and magnifying himself in all things, when the least reflection will inform him, that this is acting contrary to Justice, in there placing Rewards, where Punishment is due, in studying to gratify the

the Unworthy, and raiſe the Offender, who ought to be humbled.

Theſe Endeavours are neceſſary for thoſe, who deſire to prepare themſelves for the Mercies of their Redeemer, who comes in the Spirit of Humility: The *Baptiſt* has given us an Example; but 'tis thou, O Jeſus, muſt give us Strength to ſtand againſt the Attempts of the Pride, that is within us: 'Tis a powerful and ſubtle Evil, O God, and if we have not thy help, we ſhall fall a prey to its Force, or its Snares. Help me then, and have Compaſſion on this Preſumptuous Clay; let me now humble my ſelf in the Conſideration of thy Infinite Mercy, and my own Unworthineſs; and ſince thou haſt humbled thy ſelf, in ſtooping to all, that is contemptible, for my ſake, teach me to follow thee in all Humility, and to renounce all Pride, as much in Fact, as I do in Profeſſion.

Fourth Sunday *of* Advent.

GOSPEL.

Luk. C. 3. V. 1. ends V. 6.

JOhn came *Preaching the Baptiſm of Penance for the Remiſſion of Sins.* 'Tis an account the Evangeliſt gives of S. *John Baptiſt*, who was ſent to prepare the

World for receiving Christ: He came Preaching the Baptism of Penance, calling upon all to forsake their Evil Ways, and do Penance for their Sins, that so they might be in a Disposition for partaking of the Mercy design'd them, in the Coming of the Messias; for that the End of Christ's Coming being to make War against Sin, and Triumph over it by his Death, they could not be fitted for his Coming, who were engag'd in an Interest quite opposite to his. If this was the Preparation then, it must be so now; for Christ being the same Yesterday, and to Day, the Disposition is the same, which at all times is requir'd in those, who desire to find the Benefit of his Coming. The Preaching therefore of S. *John* must be heard in our Days, and all must do Penance.

It is so far heard and observ'd, that it is a General Practice of Christians, at this time, to prepare for the Worthy Celebration of the approaching Festival, by going to the Sacrament of Penance; and if they do it so, as to obtain Pardon of their Sins, they answer the Summons of the *Baptist*, and will not be disappointed as to other Effects, which will be the Reward of their Labours. But here is the Point, to perform this Duty in such a manner, that the Pardon of their Sins may be the

Fruit

Fruit of their Endeavours; for I cannot but fear, that in many Christians, Custom or Neglect so far takes from them the true sense of their Duty, that they lose the Benefit of the best Institutions; and while they seem to go to the Fountains of Mercy return with the increase of their Sins, and the Wrath of God provok'd against them, by the abuse of his Goodness.

This Misfortune cannot be prevented, but by a careful Performance of this great Duty, to which we are now call'd, with a due regard to every part of the Sacrament of Penance. The Examination must be made with Diligence, so as not only to call over the grosser Faults, and such as are observable to every Eye; but likewise to search into all the Passions, look under all their Folds, and be most inquisitive into those, which Pride and Self-love are most Sollicitous to keep undiscover'd. Besides the violation of General Duties, the Obligations of Particular States are to be brought to a strict Examin: And the Argument of Innocence must not be taken from the Practice or Custom of others like themselves, but from the Will of God deliver'd in the Commandments, and Expounded by Christ in the Gospel; because Custom, even of those reputed Good, seems to Authorize many things which

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the Goſpel Diſapproves. But while this Examen is made with Care, there muſt be a care too, that this diligence in ſearching be not confounded with Anxiety, and an endleſs Sollicitude; this is a Caution neceſſary for thoſe, whoſe Melancholly or Exceſſive Fears are too forward in multiplying Difficulties, and under the pretext of a ſtricter Search, raiſe ſuch a darkneſs, as takes away their Sight. Wherefore the Rule of doing all with Moderation, muſt take place here, ſo that there be no wilful Omiſſion, thro' Sloth or Neglect, nor any Confuſion rais'd by the Impertinencies of a reſtleſs and unſatisfied Fear.

The examination of Conſcience being duly made, the Chriſtian is not preſently to run to his Confeſſor; he is to remember, that Contrition is to go before Confeſſion; and for this end, after his Examen, muſt make it the Buſineſs of his whole Soul to raiſe in his heart a ſincere deteſtation of all his Sins; and this being a particular gift of God, he ought to ſeek it by Earneſt Prayer, beſeeching God to change his Heart, turn it from all Evil, and confirm him with ſuch a Reſolution of Amendment, that he may rather chuſe Death, than return to his Sins. And here the Penitent ought to be watchful againſt Deluſion; for it being eaſy, at ſuch a time, to think of a Change, to ſee the Rea-

Reasonableness of it, and to have the Spirit sensibly touch'd with the Horror of past Sins; 'tis very easy mistaking these Motions of the Thoughts and Spirit for a real Change of the heart; when, it may be, nothing of all this has reach'd it; but notwithstanding these promising Appearances, it may still be a Slave to its former Disorders, and only with its Chains for the present hid with Smoke. I do not intend by this to put Penitents into a total distrust of what they do, but only desire they wou'd not be too hasty in concluding their work to be done; but that having a true Sense of how great, and difficult a Work it is, for the Heart to be chang'd from the love of Evil, to the love of Good, they wou'd take time and pains in it, and not only think of it, or let it be the Subject of a few weak and passing Desires; but with all the earnestness of their Souls, beg it of Heaven, and back their Prayers with the Tears and Sighs of a Heart prostrate before God, under the Sense of its great misery and poverty, and of the necessity of his Grace, for the effecting the desir'd Change.

In this Point consists the best Preparation for Absolution, and therefore not to be pass'd over lightly by any, who own themselves Sinners, and desire to make their Peace with God: But however, the

Method ought to be very different in those Christians, who are subject only to ordinary Failings, or by Accident have been surpriz'd in some greater Sin, and in others, who find themselves engag'd in Vice, and their Hearts disorder'd with an Habitual Affection to Sin: For these latter cannot be sincere in their Repentance, nor serious in their Grief, for what is past; except with the Publicans and Soldiers, who, upon the *Baptist*'s Preaching Penance, came to him, and ask'd this Question, *Quid ergo faciemus? What therefore must we do?* Except, I say, they ask this Question, and consider it well with themselves, and their Director: Because no Repentance can be sincere, but in proportion to the Abhorrence of past Disorders, and the Resolutions of Amendment; and how can these Resolutions be sincere, if, being engag'd in Evil, they consider not the violence of their passions, the strength of their Disorder, and what Pains and Means may be necessary for overcoming and bringing them under Government.

These cannot but see a great Change is to be wrought in their Hearts, and that for effecting it, there must be a Necessity of many Self denials, of much Prayer and Reading, of avoiding many Occasions that lead them into Evil, of great Watchfulness

fulneſs, and of often conſulting their Spiritual Phyſician: If then the Work they ſeem to undertake, is a Work of Difficulty, and they neither take it into conſideration themſelves, nor ask of others, What they have to do? Or, What is neceſſary for accompliſhing it? 'Tis moſt certain there can be no ſincerity in their thoughts of Amendment, and all the Appearance of Grief for paſt Sins, is only Counterfeit, and like a Houſe, without a Foundation, Built on the Sands, which cannot ſtand.

Wherefore all, in theſe unhappy Circumſtances, are oblig'd ſeriouſly to conſider this Point, and from it may ſee too much grounds to fear, that if in going to the Sacrament of Penance, they pretend to grieve for paſt Sins, without laying the Ax to the Root, they do nothing of what the *Baptiſt* preſcribes, and the Abſolution, they receive, can have no effect: And what then muſt be the Conſequence of their Communions in this State, but what St. *Paul* declares, Of eating and drinking Damnation to themſelves, without diſcerning the Body of our Lord?

If there be a true Contrition for Sin, it is to be hop'd, there will be nothing wanting in the other Parts of this Sacrament. For this end, the Penitent's Rule muſt be, to lay open with Sincerity the true ſtate of his Soul, without diſguiſing,

excuſing or concealing any thing, that ought to be expreſs'd: For if private Conſiderations take place of Duty; if Pride, Fear or Shame, ſtop the Mouth of Penitents, the ſame will ſtop the Mercies of God; and the Effect of ſuch Confeſſions will be only to draw upon them the weight of new Crimes, in abuſing Holy Things, in diſſembling with the Miniſters of God, and lying to the Holy Ghoſt. And what a mockery are they made to the Devil, who, upon pretext of Shame, perſwades them to encreaſe the matter of their Shame; ſince, if ever they think of finding Mercy, they muſt not only mention what was before omitted, but likewiſe this their Sacrilegious Diſſembling too!

There muſt be Care likewiſe in performing the Penance enjoin'd, and that in the true Spirit of Penance; for if there be Delay, Neglect or Forgetfulneſs, in ſatisfying it, there is too much reaſon to ſuſpect ſuch Chriſtians to be wanting in the Senſe of their paſt Guilt, and of the Mercy of God, who is ſo eaſy in remitting it.

With theſe cautions ought all Penitents to come at this time to the Sacrament of Propitiation, that ſo their Souls being cleans'd from Sin, they may be prepar'd to meet their Redeemer in ſuch a manner,

as

as to partake of his Mercies, thro' which alone they can hope for Salvation. Help us all, O God, in this Point; grant us a ſincere Repentance of all our Sins, and permit us not, either by Neglect or Diſſembling, to pervert thy holy Inſtitutions; but that we may find Life where thou haſt commanded us to ſeek it.

Sunday *within the* Octave *of* Chriſtmas.

GOSPEL,

Luke C. 2. V. 33. ends V. 40.

BEhold he is ſet for the Ruin and Reſurrection of many in Iſrael, and for a Sign which ſhall be contradicted. Theſe words are Part of *Simeon*'s Prophecy concerning Chriſt, when he was brought, according to the *Jewiſh* Law, by his Parents into the Temple; and, being Inſpir'd by the Holy Ghoſt, oblige us to mix this Feſtival of Joy with Fear; ſince we are here inform'd, that however Chriſt comes as a Redeemer, he ſhall not be for the Reſurrection of all, but for the Ruin of many. For have we not reaſon to fear, when we ſee our ſelves in hazard, not only from our own Corruption, and the Infinite Snares of the World, and the Devil; but that

that there is Ruin threatned even from him, in whom are center'd all our hopes, and who has undertaken to ſave us? While we Rejoice therefore in this Holy Feſtival, let us Fear too.

But how is he a Jeſus or Saviour, and yet ſet for the Ruin of many? It is moſt certain, this can be no End of his Coming, neither can this Work of Infinite Mercy in the Redemption of Man, have a Deſign of being the Ruin of any. Whatever Ruin therefore follows upon it, it muſt be charg'd upon the Wickedneſs of Man, in abuſing that, which God has intended for his good.

It muſt be charg'd on the Obſtinacy of Sinners: The End of Chriſt's Coming is to make War upon Sin, and by giving himſelf a Sacrifice, to deliver Repenting Sinners from the Guilt of their Offences, and reverſe the Sentence pronounc'd againſt them. Here is Salvation deſign'd for all, and therefore all are call'd to forſake their ſins, that they may partake of the Mercy: The only Ruin is againſt Sin, and if this is to be deſtroy'd, none can periſh, but thoſe alone, who obſtinately adhering to Sin, chuſe to periſh with it, and be involv'd in the Ruin. Sin here, in the Redemption of Man, is to be conſider'd as *Sodom*, when the Cry of its Wickedneſs had aſcended to call for Vengeance from

from Heaven; and as *Lot*'s Sons-in-Law not obeying the Summons of Mercy, but chuſing to abide in the City, were conſum'd in its Flames; ſo thoſe here, who being mercifully invited to flee from ſin, becauſe it is to be deſtroy'd, if they ſtand out obſtinate againſt this Goodneſs, it is no leſs than their own Choice, if they periſh with it. See then, Chriſtians, God declares War againſt ſin; the Son of God, the true Angel of Peace, publiſhes the Sentence pronounc'd againſt it, and gives his Blood, that you may be exempt from the Ruin: If you have a Faith of thoſe Flames, that are prepar'd to conſume it, join your ſelves with *Lot* and flee from *Sodom*, flee from ſin, forſake your evil Ways; for otherwiſe the Mercy of God will be no Mercy to you; but being perverſe in ſin, you muſt fall with it, and bear a part in its Ruins. And whence then is your Ruin? Thy Deſtruction is from thy ſelf, O *Iſrael*. God calls to Mercy, and you will not hear: Jeſus offers himſelf a Sacifice for your Redemption, and you refuſe to have a part in it: Is your Ruin then from Chriſt, or your ſelves?

And this Ruin is particularly aggravated from the Contempt of that Mercy, which is offer'd for the Redemption of ſinners. For tho' all obſtinate ſinners muſt

must unavoidably fall before the Justice of God; yet those certainly will find the greater Damnation, who have with stubbornness stood out against the greatest Mercies. This is sufficiently declar'd in the Gospel, where Christ pronounces Woes against *Capernaum*, *Corazain* and *Bethsaida*, and says, It shall be more tolerable at the Day of Judgment for *Sodom*, than for them; because they had made no Advantage of the many Wonders wrought in them, but still continued in their sins, notwithstanding these Attempts of Mercy for their Conversion. If then the encrease of Mercies adds to the weight of their Crimes, who receive no Benefit from them, may not we here comprehend how Christ may be set for the Ruin of many; since knowing, how Infinite is the Mercy of his undertaking our Redemption, and how very few there are, who lay hold of this Mercy, 'tis plain the Contempt of this Goodness will be their greater Ruin? Because the Goodness of God invites to Repentance, and the stronger this Invitation is, the greater is the Obstinacy of those that resist; wherefore they cannot fail, according to their hard and impenitent Heart, of heaping to themselves Anger in the Day of Wrath.

If none were in this Danger, but those whose incredulity and Criminal Lives seem

seem to pronounce them already judg'd, it might afford some Comfort to others; but since the Text, in declaring Christ to be a Sign, which shall be contradicted, seems to include all such as walk not by the Spirit of Christ, but in Contradiction to it; we have all reason to fear, left we be involv'd in the Ruin. For if with a considerate Eye we look first on Christ, and then taking an impartial view of our selves, observe how far we depart from his Humility, Meekness, Moderation, Contempt of the World, and Crucified Life; nay, how far we set up and follow Maxims quite opposite to his, such as justify Pride, Intemperance, Prodigality, the love of Ease, of the World, and of our selves; and that according to these Maxims, the greatest part of Christians spend their Time, their Money, and their Lives; have we not reason to suspect our own ways, and see whether we be not carried away with the Torrent of Custom, and receiv'd Practices; and while we profess Christ, live not in Contradiction to him? Christ is the Truth and the Way; and if this be not the Truth and Way we follow, but others, which the World has set up and commends; I cannot see, but with our suppos'd exemption from what is generally reputed Vicious, we may be easily disappointed in our Expe-
ctation

ſtation, and there find our Ruin, where we inconſiderately hope for Life.

O God, how much have we to fear in this kind! We are on every ſide encompaſs'd with Bleſſings; thy Mercies are daily calling upon us to repent; and in this Myſtery of the Birth of Chriſt, we ſee how Sollicitous thou art for our Eternal Good, whilſt thou offer'ſt thy only Son for our Mediator, and by his Blood open'ſt us a way to Paradiſe. This thy Infinite Goodneſs ought to be a Subject of our preſent Thankſgiving and Joy, in ſeeing how much thou valueſt our Souls, how much in earneſt thou art for our Happineſs. But, O God, how much more miſerable ſhall we be then all Creatures, if we make no Advantage of this thy Mercy! How much more weighty will our Damnation be, than that of the Infidel World, than that of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*; if notwithſtanding this Chargeable Purchaſe for our Redemption, we ſtill continue Obſtinate in our Sins! Permit not this Evil, we beſeech thee, O Jeſus, but now plead ſtrongly for us, that we may have a true Senſe of thy Mercies, that theſe may awaken our drowſy Souls, and inſpire us with Reſolutions of eſpouſing thy Intereſt and our own, in making war upon all that is ſinful, and never laying down our Arms, till by thy Example and Help we become

become Victorious, triumphing over the World, over Sin and Death: For 'tis thus only thy Mercies will be our Salvation, and not our Ruin.

If the Feaſt of the Epiphany *falls on a* Sunday, *there are proper Inſtructions both for that Day and the* Sunday *following, which is the* Octave; *in that part which contains Inſtructions for the Feſtivals.*

First Sunday *after* Epiphany, *or within the* Octave.

GOSPEL,

Luke C. 2. V. 42. to the end.

DID *you not know, I was to be in my Father's Buſineſs?* Theſe words are the Anſwer Chriſt made his Parents, when after three Days ſearch, they found him in the Temple diſputing with the Doctors, and contain many good Inſtructions.

Firſt, To Parents, from the Occaſion, on which they were ſpoke, in putting them in Mind, how Sollicitous they ought to be for their Childrens good; and that if they take ſuch Ways, which ſeems a withdrawing from their Duty; they ought to look

look for them, and continue their search with an untir'd Patience; Perseverance in such Endeavours cannot fail of a Blessing, if not in finding their Children at length in the Temple, at least in other Rewards of their Charity; whilst all that will be the encrease of their own Crown, which was design'd for their Children: And will be so far satisfactory, as to give them hopes; that if the Childrens Disorders have been occasion'd by their Indiscretion or Neglect, they have by this Pious Industry, made their best Satisfaction for whatever Injury was done them. No Parents can have Assurance, that their Passions, Ill Example, or Affected Oversights, have not prepar'd their Children for all the Irregularities, to which they are subject: And is it not then Reason, they should labour in reclaiming them, if not in Charity to their Children, at least for their own sakes, that so they may satisfy for what is past, and prevent their Children's Damnation being theirs too!

Secondly, To Children, by informing them, that tho' the Duty to Parents be very great, such as ought not to be transgress'd; yet if the Will of their Parents evidently interferes with the Will of God, they are bound to do rather the Will of God, than of Man; because they being the Children of God, both by Creation, and

and by Adoption in Baptiſm, his Right is infinitely above that of Nature, and the Authority of Earthly Parents ceaſes, in concurrence with that of God. Hence it is, that when God calls to the Temple, and to Truth, and the Vice or Errors of Parents oppoſes their Authority againſt it Nature muſt yield to God; and whatever Difficulties are rais'd by Tenderneſs or Love, they muſt be all overcome, in Obedience to his Commands, who will not allow of Nature to put in *Caveats* againſt his Orders: And if any take Offence from this Proceeding, they muſt anſwer for their own Scandal; it being a ſufficient juſtification for Children; that if they love Father or Mother more than Chriſt, they cannot be his Diſciples. Chriſt ſays, he came to ſeperate Father from Son, and Daughter from Mother: Such a Separation therefore ought not to be a ſurprize, when Juſtice or Truth obliges to it; and if the World begins to queſtion it, the Childrens Anſwer muſt be, *Neſciebatis, quia in his quæ Patris ſunt, oportet nos eſſe? Did you not know, we are to be in our Father's Buſineſs?* However, when there is a Neceſſity for this Diviſion, Children ought to do all with that Tenderneſs and Reſpect, as to give Demonſtration to their Parents, that they do Violence to Nature, and that nothing

thing but their Duty to God, could put them upon this so disagreeable a Method.

A Third, To all Christians, in pressing them to an exactness in performing whatever Duties belong to God. For Christ in the Temple three Days after the Festival was ended, is a Reproof of their Coldness and Indifferency, who think all times of Prayer tedious; and therefore, when call'd to the Worship of God, or to Family-Prayer, or other Exercises of Devotion, ever find Business for delay, that so some part may be over, before they appear, and then at the end are ever upon the start to take their flight, as if afraid to over-do. Now, tho' it must be own'd, that sometimes there may be hindrance of Business, such as cannot well be dispens'd with; and that to some it may look like a Matter of Indifferency, to be wanting in things so very inconsiderable, as long as they fail not in any Substantial Duty; yet I dare boldly assert it, and let Experience determine the Truth, that where-ever there are Persons who are generally slow in going to Prayer, and the First in leaving it, who easily find Business to excuse them from Hearing Instructions, Reading Good Books, and going to the Sacraments, that such Persons, I say, are not what they should be, but are wanting in the Substantial Part of a Christian

Chriſtian, in not having a Senſe or Love of God in their Hearts, and that they are not truly in earneſt in the Buſineſs of their Salvation.

It is the general Anſwer of Careleſs Chriſtians to make their Excuſe, in not having Time, thro' the exceſs and variety of Buſineſs; and yet if they are obſerv'd, I believe, it will be commonly found, they do much leſs Buſineſs than others; that a general Sloth makes them Lazy in all they undertake; that having not time to Pray, they find time for more Sleep and Idle Converſation, above their Neighbours; that when, 'tis to ſatisfie their own Humour, or prepare for ſome Merriment, they know how to contrive and diſpatch Buſineſs, which always ſtands in their way, when Eternity calls upon them. And have not they hence reaſon to ſuſpect themſelves, if not conclude, that a Vicious Sloth is their Clog; and becauſe they are not earneſt in their Father's Buſineſs, they find ſo many pretexts to excuſe them from it?

A Laſt may be to all in trouble; that if they begin to fear, God is departed from them, they would ſeek him again with the Induſtry of an untir'd Hopes, without giving over their Search, altho' they ſeem for a time to have labour'd in vain. 'Tis a uſual Trial of his beſt Servants, to ſeem wholly

wholly to withdraw himself from them; and this, in Pious Souls, cannot fail of raising Fears and Disquiets. But what must they do? They are to moderate these, as well as they can; they are to wait upon God with Patience; they are to seek him in the Temple, and amidst the many motives to Dejection, learn to hope, with *Abraham*, even against hope. It is in this Trial, is given the best Proof of a Faithful Servant; for tho' in Persecution there are many sharper Trials, yet generally that, which is their Severity, soon puts an end to them; and God seldom fails of supporting those his Servants with interior Comforts, which afford both Strength and Sweetness under their Sufferings; besides, that knowing the Cause, for which they suffer, they have in this the Satisfaction, that it is not the Anger of God, but his Mercy, that by this way calls them to a Crown. But here in this Trial of Interior Darkness, the Christian is depriv'd of all Comforts, Prayer gives no Refreshment, the best Exercises of Devotion seem fruitless his Endeavonrs for Amendment are barren; God on whom he desires to depend, seems wholly to have withdrawn himself, so that altho' he seeks he cannot find him; and then suspecting, that all this proceeds from the Anger of God? This altogether with the long

long continuance of the Evil, renders his Caſe very afflicting, and obliges him to make uſe of all his Patience and Faith, to carry him thro' it. And with theſe he muſt go on, with the help of a Good Guide, waiting in the Temple, till God ſhall pleaſe to return, and with new Comforts give relief to his oppreſs'd Mind.

In theſe Leſſons we ſee ſome of thoſe many Infirmities, to which we are ſubiect in this Life, and the neceſſary dependance we have on God for his directing and ſupporting Grace. And now, O God, we beſeech thee, give proof of thy Mercy, in aſſiſting all concern'd, according to their Neceſſities. Be a Guide to Parents in their difficult Charge, that either by remiſneſs of Diſcipline, miſtaken Love, or ill Example, they lay not Seeds of Damnation in thoſe whom they have brought into this World. Give Children a docile Spirit, that by a ſteddy Submiſſion to their Parents Care, they may be deliver'd from the Snars of the World, of their own Paſſions and Indiſcretion; and let nothing, but the Manifeſtation of thy Will, be an Exception to this Duty. Inſpire us all with a Zeal for thy Law, and the diſcharge of all the Obligations of a Chriſtian State; deliver us from Spiritual Coldneſs and Sloth, and from hearkning to their pretended Diſpenſations in our Duty,

Duty, such as will not be allow'd by thee. Send Comfort to all those, who are under Dejection of Spirit; give them Patience and Courage, that they faint not under their Burthen; but let thy Heavenly Light return again to them, that while they seek, they may see thy Promise accomplish'd, in finding thee, and bless thy Goodness for ever.

Second Sunday *after* Epiphany.

GOSPEL,

Joh. C. 2. V. 1. ends V. 11.

Jesus was invited to the Marriage, and his Disciples. Christ was present at this Marriage Feast, to Honour and Sanctifie this State of Life, and to inform the Faithful, that they ought not to engage in it, without inviting him to the Marriage; that is, that they ought not to undertake and proceed in it, on Motives purely Humane, Temporal, and Carnal, because this is to forbid him being present, instead of inviting him to it; but that they are to consult him in the Choice they make, consider principally those Circumstances, which may render them capable of living in his Service, and observe all those Conditions which the Church prescribes. It is by this Purity of Intention

Christ

Chriſt is invited to the Marriage; and without this, it cannot be expected, that he ſhould give the Benediction of his Grace, nor concur in remedying thoſe Inconveniences, which almoſt unavoidably happen in this State, as he did this here mention'd in the want of Wine.

It is too much to expect, that Married Perſons ſhould live exempt from Diſlikes, Contentions or Jealouſies; and many Difficulties cannot fail of giving them diſturbance, either from difference of Humours, from diſagreeable Paſſions, from Indiſcretions, or the following ſuch ways, as are unwarrantable and deſtructive of the common Intereſt: And what is there to be depended on but only that Grace, which Jeſus Chriſt gives to thoſe who call him to the Marriage? It is this alone can prevent theſe Inconveniences from growing to an Exceſs, or give them Strength to go thro' them with the Patience and Courage of Chriſtians. And how can they hope for this, who binding themſelves in an Engagement of this Concern, without ever conſulting him, and Marrying without his Orders, do in effect declare, that they believe themſelves in no want of his Aſſiſtance for ſatisfying the Obligations, and bearing the difficulties of their State? It muſt be nothing leſs, than an extraordinary Mercy, if he leaves them not to

themſelves and their Paſſions, and to all thoſe Inconveniencies which are ſo frequent in a Married Life, and permits not in his Juſtice, that what they with ſo much earneſtneſs ſought, for their Temporal Advantage, may prove their Puniſhment, and even Hell in this World, and be the Way to another that is Eternal.

But the Inſtruction of Jeſus at this Marriage Feaſt reaches beyond this State, and informs Chriſtians, that tho' the Profeſſion of Virginity, and a Religious Life, has many Advantages in it, ſuch as prepare the Undertakers for the more frequent Preſence, and ſtricter Union with Chriſt; yet there is no lawful State, or Buſineſs of Life, even of Perſons engag'd in the World, in which Chriſt will not be preſent, and give his Benediction to it, if thoſe concern'd are but Sollicitous to invite him to it. We have an Encouragement for this Practical Belief, from the many Inſtances ſet down in Holy Writ, of Perſons who have found Chriſt, and had both the Comfort and Bleſſing of his Sacred Preſence. *Peter*, with ſome others of the Apoſtles, found him, whilſt engag'd in their Trade of Fiſhing; *Zacheus* found him on the Road, the *Samaritan* Woman at the Well, when ſhe was fetching Water for her Family; the Blind Man, when he was Begging, the Sick Man

Man, near the Pond-ſide taking care for his Health; *Magdalen* at an Entertainment; the Lame-Man in the Temple, and thoſe mention'd in this Goſpel, at their Marriage.

And what were all theſe Occurrences? Not the Effect of Chance, but the Appointments of Providence, for the Comfort of Chriſtians in all Conditions, that they might not diſquiet themſelves under any Circumſtances, as if they were not in a way of finding Chriſt, or working out their Salvation; but to be their Aſſurance, that if the hurry of Neceſſary Buſineſs gives little Opportunity for Prayer or Recollection, yet they may find Chriſt preſent with them, even in their Buſineſs, if they will be but Sollicitous to invite him; the Tradeſman may find him in his Shop, the Labourer at his Work, the Plowman in the Field, the Porter in the Streets, the Traveller on the Road, the Servant in the Kitchen, at the Waſh-Bowl or Spit, thoſe that are Sick by their Bed-ſide, and the Afflicted in all their Diſtreſs.

All this depends only on good Management, and it being ſo much the Chriſtian's Intereſt to learn it, eſpecially of thoſe, who are oblig'd to labour, I wiſh they would take S. *Francis Sales* for their Maſter, who in his *Introduction*, *Part* 3*d*. *C*. 35. teaches this Leſſon ſo well, that the

beſt Advice I can give them, is to read it every Week, that ſo they may become perfect in it, and make this Advantage of all their Labours, as not only to work for Bread, but alſo for a better Recompence, which is Life Everlaſting.

The Method of practiſing it, muſt be in making an Offering of every thing they do to God. He that has ſo expreſly declar'd the acceptance of the Widow's Mite, and the Value of a Cup of Cold Water given in his Name, has in this put it beyond all doubt, that there is nothing in it ſelf ſo inconſiderable, but, if undertaken and perform'd in his Name, will be accepted by him, in order to the obtaining from him an Eternal Recompence. And if every thing, even the ordinary Actions of Human Life, as of Eating and Drinking, according to St. *Paul*'s Advice, may be thus Conſecrated to God, and have a part in the Purchaſe; with much more reaſon, may the Labours of thoſe, that work daily for Bread, be brought under this Head. For however ſtraitneſs of Fortune may render them neceſſary; yet they may be undertaken, Firſt, As a Charity due to themſelves or Family; Secondly, As an Act of Juſtice, to ſatisfy the Obligation they have of providing for thoſe under their Care: And theſe being Duties enjoin'd them by God himſelf, they

they may the more eaſily be begun in his Name, and be offer'd to him, as a Sacrifice of Obedience to his Commands. And if they take all poſſible Care to be Faithful in them, this Fidelity muſt have place amongſt Chriſtian Vertues, and is one of thoſe, to which Chriſt has promis'd a Reward; for he, that ſhall be Faithful in ſmall Matters, ſhall be ſet over greater.

And ſince all Services, and laborious Employments, have ſomething difficult in them, whether it be in the labour it ſelf, or in the Circumſtances of giving Attendance to it, as in early riſing, or ſetting up late, or in tedious waiting, or in denying Nature many Satisfactions, to which it is inclin'd, and others take; or in ſerving nice and diſagreeable Humours, or in undeſerv'd Reproofs, or in being ſubject to Impertinencies, or in croſs Accidents, *&c.* there is not one of theſe, which may not be embrac'd, in compliance with the Will of God, be made the Exerciſe of daily Patience and Humility, and be accepted as a Penance of their Sins due from the Juſtice of God.

Now if Chriſtians wou'd learn this Leſſon, is it not plain, that in doing only that, to which they are otherwiſe oblig'd, they would make their Lives the Exerciſe of the greateſt Virtues, of Charity, Juſtice, Patience, Humility and Penance?

And who can doubt, but that Christ wou'd be then with them, to give a Blessing to their Labours, and make them a Sacrifice acceptable to God? Thus certainly it might be: And is it not a Matter of Pity, that this Lesson is not more universally practis'd amongst Servants, and Labouring Christians; who live generally so little concern'd for their greatest Interest, that working hard all the Year for Poor Wages, they offer nothing of what they do, to him, who has promis'd to be more Bountiful in his Rewards; and that having receiv'd their Wages, they have all they can expect? This is very ill Husbandry, such as we have all too much reason to lament in our selves; and we cannot do better this Day, than beg a Remedy for it. Help us therefore, O God, and teach us to be Wise; that having so many Opportunities ever Day, of making Offerings to thee, both of what we do, and what we suffer, we may improve the Occasions, for our Eternal Advantage: 'Tis a wonder of thy Goodness, that thou wilt accept any thing from such unworthy Offerers; But our Sloth and Indifferency is a greater wonder, that thou being ever ready to accept, we are generally so very unmindful of making our Offerings to thee, when all the Advantage too is to be our

our own, What can we then do, but bewail our Blindneſs, and beſeech thee, O Jeſus, to be ever with us in all we do, that all our Actions and Sufferings being ſanctified by thy Preſence, we may learn to turn all to the Honour of our God, and the Salvation of our Souls?

Third Sunday *after* Epiphany.

GOSPEL,

Mat. C. 8. V. 1. ends. V. 13.

LORD, my Servant lies Sick of a Palſey in my Houſe, and is very much tormented. They are the Words of the Centurion, making his Petition to Chriſt in behalf of his Sick Servant. His great Solicitude for him, is firſt, an Inſtruction to all Heads of Families, of the Care they ought to have of their Servants, in time of Sickneſs; not then to turn them out of Doors, when they ſtand moſt in need of help; but to conſider them, as a Part of their Family, nay, even as their Children; for ſo the Centurion does, who in his Addreſs to Chriſt, calls his Servant his Child, *Puer meus jacet in domo Paralyticus*; and to give them that Aſſiſtance, as is in Charity due upon theſe Titles: Tho' there ſeems ſomething of Equity too; for if Servants give their Health to their Ma-

ſters, does not Juſtice require ſome Care to be taken of them, when they are Sick, for recovering that, which is loſt in their Service? If Chriſtian Juſtice or Charity teaches it not, at leaſt Compaſſion ought; for otherwiſe that will be denied to Servants, which is a common Privilege of Horſes and Dogs.

This Duty preſſes with greater force in regard of their Souls; ſo that if Servants are either Careleſs in their Chriſtian Duties, or ſubject to any kind of ſinful Diſorder, by which they offend God, and give ill Example to their Neighbour. Thoſe in whoſe Care they are, muſt uſe all poſſible Endeavours, in order to reclaim and bring them to a better Diſpoſition of Spiritual Health: Becauſe they have the Charge of them, and are bound to conſider all their Ways; and S. *Paul* lets them know in plain terms, what their Charge is, 1. *Tim.* 5. 8. *He that has not a Care of thoſe, that belong to him, and principally thoſe of his Family, has denied his Faith, and is worſe than a Heathen.* From which Principle we may make ſome Judgment of the Heads of Families, and ſee the different degrees, in which they tranſgreſs their Duty.

The Firſt is of thoſe, who wholly neglect their Servants, ſo that, tho' they ſee them ſubject to great Diſorders and Profaneſs,

phaneſs, paſs all by without any Concern, as if they were no part of their Care.

The Second is of thoſe who obſerve little or no Diſcipline in their Families, but for want of good Order, give their Servants frequent Opportunities of taking their own Ways, both in idle Converſation, and ill Company, and thus leaving them too often to the Conduct of their own Indiſcretion become the Occaſion of their Ruin, both as to Body and Soul. How often is it, that hence good Parents, having placed their Children out for learning a Trade, find them, after a few Months or Years, corrupted beyond Recovery? And upon whom muſt this Miſcarriage be charg'd? The Servants are not to be excus'd, becauſe they ought to be more careful of themſelves: But it will certainly fall with a heavy weight on the Maſters, who knowing the Hazards of their unexperienc'd Years; took not due Care to prevent them, by obliging them to be ſubject to better Order, than that of governing themſelves. Whence Maſters may obſerve, that, to ſatisfy their Duty, they muſt not only ſee that Servants be diligent in their Hours of Buſineſs, but how they ſpend their leiſure time, what Company and Hours they keep, what are their Expences. how they employ *Sundays*

and *Holidays*, with many other Particulars which are neceſſary for preventing the many Miſchiefs, to which they are otherwiſe expos'd.

The Third is of thoſe, who are not Sollicitous, that their Servants be duly inſtructed, or that they be exact in their Duties of Prayer, Reading, and going to the Sacraments. Thoſe, who obſerve, how great Ignorance there is in this Rank of Chriſtians; how many are the Miſchiefs of their Ignorance and Sloth; how eaſily they find pretexts for excuſing them in all that regards their Soul, will ſoon diſcover, what the Obligation is of thoſe, under whoſe Care they are; and that if theſe are not Watchful in enquiring into their Ways, Charitable in admoniſhing, and Earneſt in ſpurring them on, they muſt neceſſarily draw upon their own Souls the guilt of their Servants neglects.

The Fourth is of thoſe, whoſe Worldly and Sollicitous Spirit, will not allow their Servants to ſpare time for their Prayers, or other like Duties; but think all that time loſt, which is not ſpent in their Buſineſs.

The Laſt is of thoſe, whoſe difficult Temper, not capable of being pleas'd, is following Servants ſo cloſely with Expoſtulations and Reproofs, that they keep them

them always uneasy, and never permit their Minds to calm so much, as to be capable of enjoying any inward Peace, or performing any Duty towards God. Not that seasonable and deserv'd Reproof is to be condemn'd; but that some Consideration is to be had of Servants, so that while Diligence is expected from them, they be not however persecuted upon every Trifling Exception, suggested by a restless and peevish Humour; for that this robs them of all Comfort, and indispose them from those Duties, which cannot be satisfied amidst such Confusion.

In these particular ways, besides that of ill Example, and others, many are wanting in that Duty, which belongs to such as are under their Charge, and may find at the last Day, a large Account brought in against them, from the pernicious Consequences of this Neglect. But now while Charity and Justice obliges Masters to a great Care in regard of their Servants; the same Virtues bring a great Obligation likewise upon Servants, as to the Care they ought to have of their Masters.

First, In the Point of Respect, in putting a restraint upon their Words, so as, whether in the Case of Just or Unjust Reproof, to say nothing unbecoming their Condition; nor, upon any Provocation, to let Passion put them upon disrespectful Expressions.

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Expreſſions. By moderate Anſwers they muſt endeavour to remove Miſtakes; and where theſe are not admitted, they muſt leave the reſt to Time and Providence to do them Right. This ſame Reſtraint muſt tye their Lips alſo behind their Maſters Backs, ſo as to ſuppreſs all manner of undecent Complaints and Murmerings, ſuch eſpecially, as are a leſs'ning to thoſe, whom they ſerve: And this Silence ought to be more ſtrictly obſerv'd, in never publiſhing to Strangers the Secrets of the Families, in which they are; for this is a kind of Treachery: And if their Maſters come to ſuffer in Reputation, by their Goſſiping, Indiſcretion, or Malice, they muſt Anſwer it both to God and Man.

Secondly, In the point of Fidelity, ſo as not to let their Maſters ſuffer any prejudice in their Goods, by their Neglect, or Prodigality, or for making any Advantage to themſelves. Hence Juſtice obliges them to be as careful of whatever is under their Charge, as if it were their own; and likewiſe to make Satisfaction for whatever Loſs happens to their Maſter, thro' their Sloth, or affected Careleſſneſs. It obliges them likewiſe to manage all with their greateſt Induſtry for his Advantage, and to diſpoſe of nothing, that is his, but by his Order or Permiſſion. And therefore, as to all, they otherwiſe give away, or

ſpend

ſpend in treating Companions or Friends, it muſt be conſider'd as nothing leſs than Theft, and 'tis their Duty to ſatisfy for what they have thus miſpent. It obliges them again to avoid all manner of Contracts, in which their own Intereſt is advanc'd by their Maſter's Loſs: There are variety of theſe among ſuch as have the managing or paying of Money, and Practice pleads ſtrongly for them; but ſince they generally entrench upon Juſtice, theſe cannot be allow'd in any, who think of being call'd to an Account for all they do.

Thirdly, In the Point of Diligence, ſo that they faithfully perform whatever Service they undertake; not only, when they have the Maſters Eye to overlook them; but even, when they are without a Witneſs, and preſume upon never being queſtion'd for what they do. This it is they undertake, and they are as much oblig'd to ſatisfy it, as if every Particular were expreſs'd in a formal Contract. The Obligation therefore is of ſtrict Juſtice, and it ought to preſs with ſo much weight upon the Conſcience of every one in Service, that I cannot but fear, thoſe, who are wanting in it, either thro' Sloth, or by imperfect Endeavours of pleaſing the Eye, are wanting in the moſt Subſtantial Principles of Juſtice and Faith, and cannot be Good Chriſtians, if they are not Diligent Servants. Theſe

These are the Principal Points, which ought to be the Concern both of Masters and Servants; and neither can have true Peace of Conscience, but by examining themselves on these particulars, and being careful in the exact discharge of them; because that Justice, we owe to God and our Neighbour, obliges all the Professors of Christianity, not only to satisfy their General Duties, which are common to all, but those likewise, which belong to every Particular State; for thus are we taught both by Nature and Reason, both by Scripture and Faith. Since therefore thou art pleas'd, O God, by thy Gospel, thus to put us in mind of our Duties, give us Grace likewise, that we may be Faithful in them; we are too easy in deceiving our selves, in doing our Duty by halves; teach us to be more sincere, and deliver us from all Delusion, that having receiv'd our Charge from thee, we may be prepar'd to render a just Account.

Fourth Sunday *after* Epiphany.

GOSPEL.

Mat. C. 8. V. 23. ends V. 27.

LORD, *save us, we perish.* In these words the Apostles address'd themselves to Christ in their Distress, when, he

he ſleeping in the Ship, they were in danger from the violence of a ſudden Storm. This danger of the Apoſtles affords Matter of Comfort to Chriſtians, in the troubles that befal them in this Life. For if theſe, having Chriſt in their Company, and undertaking to paſs over the Sea, with his Conſent, and even by his Order, as muſt be here preſum'd, find themſelves ſurpriz'd in a Tempeſt, ſuch as threatens them with Shipwrack; does not this prepare Chriſtians againſt all Surprize, if in ſatisfying their beſt Duties, and turning their Labours, where the manifeſt Will of God ſeems to lead them, they yet meet with Difficulties, and find ſuch Perſecution rais'd againſt them, as not only to threaten a Miſcarriage, but likewiſe to put them upon queſtioning the Juſtice of their Undertaking?

This then is the Inſtruction of the preſent Storm: Chriſtians, like the Apoſtles, are to engage in nothing, but by the Orders of Chriſt; that is, are ever to be under the Conduct of Juſtice and Duty. Being thus embark'd, they are not to think themſelves privileg'd from Tempeſts and Danger, but hoping and praying for a proſperous Gale, they are to be ſtill prepar'd for Storms; becauſe they ſee, what the Method of Providence is; that God does not raiſe the fury of the Waves againſt a

Jonas

Jonas only, who Sails contrary to his Orders; but likewiſe, when Jeſus is in the Ship, the Apoſtles at the Helm, and they Steering by his Commiſſion. This has been ſo frequently the Conduct of God, that all ſurprize here muſt be charg'd upon want of Obſervation. Was not *Abraham* call'd by God himſelf out of his Country, and the Land pointed out to him by the Finger of God, into which he was to go? When, behold a Famine meets him, he cannot ſubſiſt where Providence has directed; but he is oblig'd to ſeek relief by a new Pilgrimage. *Moſes* is by Name Summon'd from Heaven, to go and deliver the *Iſraelites* from their Captivity; he undertakes it in the very Way appointed him by God; and what is the immediate Effect? The People, he attempted to relieve, are oppreſs'd with greater Burthens, the Court of *Pharaoh* is exaſperated by his Embaſſy, and the *Iſraelites* reproach him for having put a Sword into their Enemies Hand to Kill them. The Children of *Iſrael* makes a juſt War upon *Benjamin*, (*Judg.* c. 20.) they aſſemble before the Houſe of God, have a General of God's Appointment, and his expreſs Orders for engageing in Battel; twice they conſult him, and by him are encourag'd to Fight, and yet are twice Overthrown with a great Slaughter. And did

did not the Apoſtles afterwards, in the New Law, undertake the Preaching of the Goſpel by the poſitive Commands of Chriſt; and how many Perſecutions were rais'd againſt them? What a univerſal Oppoſition did they find? And did not the World ſeem to triumph over them, whilſt they all fell in the Attempt, and were made a Sacrifice to Malice and Error?

If this then be the Conduct of God, what muſt Chriſtians do? Muſt not they go on ever reſolutely in their Duty, and not be diſcourag'd with whatever Difficulties thwart them in their way. If in ſatisfying the Obligations of Juſtice, if in doing Charities, if in following Chriſt, and being Faithfull to Truth, they not only meet with Oppoſition, but often find themſelves drawn in to moſt perplexing Circumſtances, are not they quietly to ſubmit to theſe Appointments of Providence, and be contented, if God calls them to exerciſe their Patience with their other Pious Deſigns? What is this, but to raiſe the value of what they do, and by interrupting the Peace of their Undertakings, to defer their Satisfactions to a better World? What is it, but to recall them to the knowledge of themſelves, to make them more ſenſible of Humane Weakneſs, and oblige them to a greater dependance

dependance on God? Should theſe Contradictions then cauſe dejection in Chriſtians, and caſt a damp on their Spirits, as if carrying with them the Diſpleaſure of God, and being Arguments of his diſapproving their Undertakings? This cannot be altogether prevented; it may be in their firſt Surprize, and Melancholy, improv'd by a ſubtle Enemy, may be too forward in encreaſing the Confuſion; but it muſt be their Endeavour to withſtand this Impoſture, by compoſing their diſorder'd Thoughts, and peaceably leaving God to the Secrets of his own Conduct; remembring, that as it was his Will, they ſhould undertake what Charity or Juſtice inſpir'd; ſo it is his Will, they ſhould ſuffer the Diſappointments of their Deſigns, and ſubmit to the Troubles, that are the Conſequence of their Attempts; and in ſuch Suffering, may be much more their Advantage, than if Peace, Applauſe and Succeſs had anſwer'd their Wiſhes.

It is under ſuch Troubles, they may make their Petitions to God with greater Confidence than at other times; ſince God's Infinite Mercy cannot be wanting in their Relief, whoſe troubles are not the Effects of their Raſhneſs or Vice, but of their Duty; in ſuch Diſtreſs the Apoſtles invok'd their Maſter's help, and ſoon found it in an unexpected Calm, which quieted

quieted both the Sea and their Fears. And while Christians see, that the Sea and Winds obey his Voice, and in this confess, all Creatures to be subject to his Power, have not they reason to raise their Hopes in proportion to this Power, especially where his Goodness too is engag'd by their Suffering in his Cause, and so with Confidence expect, that he will appear in their behalf, either to Command a Calm, or give them Strength to hold out with a Couragious Patience amidst the Dangers of the Storm.

The Prayer the Apostles us'd, must be very effectual for this: *Lord, save us, we perish*; since nothing can better express our own Misery, and the absolute dependance we have on God, Two necessary Conditions for obtaining help: And what better Encouragement, than in the speedy Relief, it brought to the Apostles in their Distress? I wish only, it were more frequent amongst Christians, and that, then especially, when they are not capable of longer Prayer, they would not omit this. They easily see here the Success of a few words, when coming from a sincere Heart, and sensible of its Wants; and this Success is a sufficient Condemnation of their Practice, who upon every Surprize, pronounce this Sacred Name of *Lord*, with many others, with their Lips, but without

without any Senſe of what they ſay; that is, who take the Name of God in vain. For is it not in vain, when 'tis without Reſpect and Thought? Is not in vain, when it comes from no farther, than their Lips? Is it not in vain, when that, which is ſo uſeful, and might be ſo much to their Advantage, in drawing down the Bleſſings of Heaven, they ſpeak to no purpoſe, and for no uſe at all, but only as a By-word; that is, the moſt inſignificant of all? They are forward enough in crying out againſt *Waſte* and *Abuſe*, when that, which might be ſerviceable to themſelves or Family, is by neglect render'd uſeleſs, or careleſly thrown away: Here Servants muſt be condemn'd, and their Reproof is deſerv'd. What then muſt it be, in the frequent abuſe of the Sacred Names of God and our Redeemer? Is there no better uſe of theſe, than in making uſeleſs Exclamations, and letting them be the Burthen of every Ridiculous Surprize and Outcry? This however is no matter of wonder in thoſe, whoſe diſorder'd Lives ſpeak too plainly their Contempt of all that is Holy: But that this ſhould be the practice of ſuch, whoſe better Principles put them upon taking pains for Heaven, is ſo great an Abſurdity, that it muſt be ſet down as juſt matter of Surprize, that profeſs'd

Piety

Piety ſhould tolerate a Cuſtom ſo diſreſpectful of God, and of ſuch ill Example to Men. Whilſt therefore thou art pleas'd, O God, to offer thy ſelf for the Protector of Chriſtians, and thy Mercy is ever ready to appear in their Relief, who, ſenſible of their Miſery, invoke thy Holy Name, in time of their Diſtreſs, teach all in Trouble to ſeek Help in thee, and let thy Goodneſs ever anſwer their Wants, for the Encouragement of their Piety: But, O God, as for thoſe, who abuſe thy Name, in prophaning and making that Common, which ought to be moſt Sacred, give them a Senſe of this Irreverence, that while they every Day pray, that thy Name may be ſanctified, they may not, with the ſame Lips, bring it into Contempt.

Fifth Sunday *after* Epiphany.

GOSPEL,

Mat. C. 13. V. 24. ends V. 30.

LET *both grow till the Harveſt.* The Husbandman had ſow'd good Seed in his Field; but growing up, it appear'd mix'd with Tares: And the Goſpel ſays; theſe were ſown by the Enemy, whilſt they were ſleeping, whoſe Watchfulneſs ſhould have prevented this Miſchief. By which

which we are inform'd, that the general Occaſion of all manner of Diſorders, both Publick and Private, is want of Care, by their, ſleeping, who ſhould be upon the Watch. This is the Root of ſo many Scandals, that disfigure the Church, of ſo many Corruptions amongſt Religious; they, who are entruſted with the Charge, having their Eyes ſhut by Sloth, or diverted from their Duty by the Charms of Pleaſure, Intereſt or Ambition, give opportunity to the Devil, of laying thoſe Seeds, which, tho' at firſt undiſcern'd, are not afterwards to be rooted out, but with the hazard of the good Corn. This ſame is the Occaſion of ſo much Vice amongſt the Flock? a general Careleſneſs opens a Way to all manner of Corruption; they conſider not their own Weakneſs, are not ſenſible of his Snares, who lyes in wait to deceive; they think not of the Difficulties in a Virtuous Life; hence they take not pains to ſecure themſelves, they examine not into the Nature of Things, are not Jealous of being deceiv'd, Sollicite not for Help in proportion to their Wants. And what is the Effect? The buſie Enemy takes the Advantage of this want of Care; he ſows his Tares, and behold how they grow up; profeſs'd Pride and Ambition is their Practice, who are taught Humility by their Goſpel; they, who are commanded

commanded to be Poor in Spirit, ſpend their whole Souls in the eager ſearch after Riches; they, who are enjoin'd Moderation in all things, live in the Practice of a general Intemperance and Exceſs; Self-denial is requir'd, and their whole Buſineſs, is to gratify themſelves; Paſſion and Revenge appear inſtead of Charity and Meekneſs; Over-reaching and Deceit, inſtead of Juſtice and Plain-dealing; Contention inſtead of Peace; Hypocriſie and Flattery, inſtead of Singleneſs of Heart; Superſtition inſtead of Faith, and Earth ſought for, inſtead of the Kingdom of God, and its Juſtice.

This is the Face of things, and even of that part of the Chriſtian World, whoſe Goſpel and Faith is not to be queſtion'd; ſo that, while Truth is ſecur'd to the Church by the Promiſes of God, and the Aſſiſtance of his unerring Spirit, and abundant Proviſion made for all kind of Holineſs and Grace; yet notwithſtanding this Good Seed ſown by the Maſter of the Field, there is ſo much Corruption, Scandals, Abuſes, Prophaneneſs and Wickedneſs, amongſt the Members of it, both Paſtors and Flock, that the Tares every where appearing, the Good Corn is ſcarce to be diſcern'd. Theſe Tares are very remarkable to Travellers, and theſe judging of the whole, by what is ſo obvious

to

to them, they often conclude, there can be no Truth, where ſo many unwarrantable Practices are tolerated. Theſe Tares are manifeſt to Seekers, and they are many times diſcourag'd from all farther enquiry, by the Scandalous Vices of thoſe, who are Profeſſors of the Truth. Nay, this is ſo great a Stumbling-block to ſuch as are in a greater meaſure convinc'd of the Principles and Means in the Church; for teaching the Truth, that they are often at a ſtand for many Years, before they can get over it, and reconcile the Corrupt Abuſes of Church-men, with the Truth and Doctrine of the Church. In this manner, the Superſtitions and Irregularities of Eccleſiaſticks, Religious and Laity, obſcure that Light, Chriſt has ſet up, for leading the whole World into Truth, and ſmother that Evidence, which otherwiſe would be a Force upon the moſt Obſtinate.

This it was Chriſt foreſaw, and for the help of ſincere Enquirers, he propoſes this Parable, to remove this Block out of their way, or, at leaſt, to help them over it. He ſhews, that tho' the Church, which is the Field of Chriſt, be Holy, thro' the Good Seed ſown in it, yet, it is not to be expected, that all ſhould be found Holy, who are within the Encloſure: Tares are likewiſe ſown by the Enemy,

my, thro' their neglect, who ought to be more watchful; these grow up, in many evil Practices, and are mix'd with the Good Corn, and this is the Posture of Christ's Church on Earth. This same Information he gives in other Parables, as of the ten Virgins, (the Figure of his Church) of which number, Ten were Wise, and Ten Foolish: And in the Parable of the Floor, in which there was not only Wheat, but likewise Straw and Chaff: In this Sense, the Apostle says, In a great House, there are not only Vessels of Gold and Silver, but also of Wood and Clay, some Vessels of Honour, and some of Dishonour; and in the same must be understood, what Christ says, That many are call'd, but few are chosen: And these very Parables S. *Cyprian* and S. *Augustin* make use of against the *Donatists*, to prove the unreasonableness of their seperating from the Church, because of the corrupt Practices of her Members; hence shewing, that tho' there be Tares in the Church, yet it cannot be justifiable in any to seperate from the Corn, on account of the Tares, And this must be a Light to all those, who look for the Truth, clear enough to inform them, that Corruptions being found amongst the Members of the Church, is not enough to justify them in living seperate from it;

and likewiſe to demonſtrate their Injuſtice who condemn the Church, becauſe of the Tares found in it.

But why are not the Tares rooted up, ſince they are ſo injurious to thoſe within, and ſo Scandalous to thoſe without the Church? There are not wanting Pious Souls, whoſe Zeal, like the Servants mention'd in the Goſpel, puſhes them on, not only to deſire, but to undertake this Work; and in all Ages there have been Apoſtolick Men, who have made great Reformations: But however ſome Diſorders there are, ſo ſtrenthen'd by Power, Intereſt, or Number, that to attempt to root them out, would be follow'd with ſuch Confuſions, that the ill Conſequence of endeavouring their Cure, would be much greater than their ill Example in being tolerated. Upon which Conſideration, the Maſter ſilenc'd the Zeal of thoſe Servants, who made the motion of gathering up the Tares, by telling them of the danger of rooting up the Wheat with the Tares, and, upon this, requiring them to *let both grow till the Harveſt.* This is the Anſwer St. *Auguſtin* made to *Parmenion* the *Donatiſt*: *The Conſideration,* ſays he, *of preſerving Peace, ſometimes keeps off the ſeverity of Diſcipline; which nevertheleſs is put in Execution, when it can be done ſecurely, and there is evident reaſon to hope,* that

that Eccleſiaſtical Cenſures may work a wholeſome Correction, without the Wound of Schiſm.

But however, tho' the Tares are thus ſpar'd, 'tis in favour of the Corn, and only for a time: For at the Harveſt, Command will be given to gather the Tares and to caſt them into the Fire; and this muſt be the unhappy Fate of all thoſe, who by their Scandalous Practices, are like Tares in the Church; they muſt be the Fuel of Everlaſting Fire, in which they ſhall be tormented, but not conſum'd. Unhappy Tares; who by their united Intereſt and Strength, are beyond the Power of being corrected by Humane Means and muſt be left to the Juſtice of an Almighty Hand, without the poſſibility of Amendment or Relief! But what is on Earth impracticable in General, is in the Power of every Particular; tho 'the whole cannot be reform'd, yet every ſingle Perſon of this Number, may receive the Benefit of Mercy here on Earth, if they will but ſeek it in earneſt. This it is we beg of thee, O God, for our ſelves, as far as we are concern'd, and for all others, who by their Wickedneſs, are comprehended under this Figure of the Tares. Give to all a Senſe of their Diſorders, that they may underſtand, how great an Evil it is to forſake thy Law, to

be a Diſhonour to thy Church, and by their Scandalous Example, to draw others into the Way of Damnation, and diſcourage thoſe, who ſeek for Truth: Grant them Grace to amend, without waiting for Company, and effectually to make uſe of thoſe Means, thou haſt ordain'd for their Eſtabliſhment in Virtue, that thus becoming good Corn, they may not be found amongſt the Tares, which are to be caſt into endleſs Flames.

Sixth Sunday *after* Epiphany.

GOSPEL,

Mat. C. 13. V. 31. ends V. 35.

THE *Kingdom of Heaven is like a Grain of Muſtard ſeed.* In this Parable is given us by Chriſt an Idea of the Church and her Doctrine, in appearing but inconſiderable in their beginning, and very great in their Progreſs; for this is principally ſignified both in the Muſtard-ſeed and Leaven, which make up the Subject of this Goſpel. But becauſe theſe are Marks, which, in ſome kind belong to all that is Humane; there being no Empire or Religion, tho' moſt abſurd, which have at any time grown powerful in the World, but what have been Contemptible in their Infancy, and firſt Abetters, we

we muſt therefore ſee, wherein theſe Marks are Particular to the Church and Doctrine of Chriſt.

The Works of Men are generally inconſiderable in their Beginnings, but 'tis never by their own Will and Choice: they always aim at Pomp and Greatneſs, and if they accompliſh not their Deſigns at the firſt Attempt, 'tis ever againſt their Wills, and the only reaſon is, becauſe they cannot. For this Cauſe, the moſt Commanding Empires of the World, never ſhew'd the greateſt Power in their firſt beginning, becauſe they had it not. And *Mahomet*, as ſoon as he was ſtrengthen'd by the number of Followers, preſently took Arms, and bent all his Force to ſubject People to him. There is nothing of this in the little Beginnings of the Church: For its Littleneſs was according to the Choice and poſitive Will of Chriſt. This Will be manifeſted in himſelf, after the Wonders at his Birth, chuſing ſo many Years of an obſcure and private Life; and afterwards, tho' having all things ſubject to his power, never pretending to any degree of State, or to any thing, that could render him Great in the Eyes of the World; his Converſation was generally with the Poor; to the Poor he preach'd, not in Courts, but in the Deſart and Mountains; his Miracles were a-

mongſt the Diſtreſs'd, and never before Princes; and tho' they were ſuch, as both in Number and Manner, were never wrought by any other, yet they were much Diminiſh'd, and the Glory of them eclips'd to the *Jews*, by his Poverty, and the Meanneſs of his Living and Retinue, chuſing thoſe for his Followers, who had neither Authority nor Intereſt to gain upon the World. Thus was Chriſt Little in all his Ways, and all was the Effect of his Choice, and not of Force.

The ſame is more viſible in the Method he took for Converting the World, making no uſe either of Arms or Power, but only of the preaching of a few Fiſhermen; and Eſtabliſhing his Doctrine, not ſo much by Miracles, as by that which is moſt Contemptible in the World, even by their Contempt, Reproaches, Perſecution and Suffering; all their Perſwaſives being to deſpiſe that which Inclination and Cuſtom recommend as Great and Honourable, and ſetting a Value upon nothing, but what the World deſpiſes; that is, upon Suffering, Forgiving, not Retaliating, upon Poverty, Meekneſs and Humility. Thus was the Church Little in its Beginning, both as to its Foundation and Head, who was Chriſt, as to its Paſtors the Apoſtles, as to the manner of being Propagated, and its Doctrine. And

how

how did it ſoon become Great, when within a few Ages, it comprehended within its Pale thoſe Nations and Peoples, which had oppos'd it, when it ſpread from Eaſt to Weſt, and had the greateſt Emperors and Princes ſubjecting themſelves to its Direction?

Now as the Church was Little in its Origine, not by Force, but by the expreſs Will of God, and was reſembled by the Muſtard-Seed; ſo I think in the ſame, all that are Members of the Church have directions for the general Method, they ought to take all their Lives: The Members of the Church ought to follow the Method of the Church; and what Chriſt declar'd to be his Choice for it, ſhews what is to be their Choice.

And what is this Method? They ought to chuſe to be Little; they are to eſteem thoſe things moſt Valuable, which the World moſt undervalues; they are not to affect Noiſe and Pomp, nor love any thing, that draws the Eyes of the World upon them: And as for Greatneſs, they are chiefly to be Sollicitous for that only, which is the Effect of thus voluntarily leſs'ning themſelves.

This is a hard Leſſon for a World, wherein Pride and Ambition make up a Torrent, which, with the Violence of its Streams, carries away almoſt all, that are

Born into it; ſo that the Abridgment of the Chriſtian's Life, thro' this Corruption, may be compriz'd in theſe few words, of being eagerly bent upon magnifying himſelf, by all the Vanity and Pomp, that is within his reach. This is but too viſible from the common Practice of the World, where in proportion to what every one has receiv'd, ſo they endeavour to make a Noiſe and Shew, and ſeem to meaſure their happineſs, by the Number of their Admirers. This is the Deſign in their Table and Dreſs, in their Furniture and Retinue; to this are turn'd whatever Advantages they have of Nature; this is the End of their Education; ſo that inſtead of teaching Youth the Humility and Self-denial of the Goſpel, they train them up in all the little Arts of Vanity, take pains to make them in love with themſelves, and fond of being admir'd by others.

Now for Temporal and Worldly Souls to take this Method, is no wonder, becauſe theſe are the proper Means to be Temporally and Worldly Great; but for Chriſtian and Believing Souls to be ſo bent upon it, is a matter of juſt ſurprize ſince the Goſpel, which, they ſay, they believe and follow, leads them quite another way, and ſhews, that the Greatneſs, which they ought to ſeek, is to be the

Effect

Effect of their chuſing here to be Little; and that for them to be Sollicitous for Worldly Greatneſs, is the ready way to be diſappointed in that more Subſtantial Glory, which is the End of their Being, and their Faith. This is ſo true, that there is not any thing, tho' the moſt Commendable Duties of a Chriſtian State which loſe not their whole Value, if perform'd with a Deſign of growing in the Eſteem of Men; thus it is pronounc'd by Chriſt concerning Almſgiving, Faſting, and Prayer; and the Apoſtle declares, that if in his Preaching the Goſpel, he ſhould be Sollicitous to pleaſe Men, he upon this, ſhould be no Servant of Jeſus Chriſt. If this then be of ſuch a pernicious Nature, that like a Cancer, it eats out the Marrow, and renders the beſt of Actions not only uſeleſs, but turns them all into Corruption; what muſt their unhappineſs be, who, in Conſequence to their Faith, pretending to live and labour for Eternity, make it the main Buſineſs of their Life and Labour, of their Learning, Goods and Money, to be great in the Opinion of Men, and magnifie themſelves in this World? Is it not evident, that whatever they do, of this kind is all loſt as to Eternity; and that when the time of Retribution comes, they ſhall be confounded with this reproachful

Check to all expectation, of their having already receiv'd their Reward?

But what then, is all good to be done in the dark, left the obſervation of Men ſhould deſtroy its whole Value? The Goſpel gives frequent Cautions upon this Subject, but ſo that Chriſtians are encourag'd to let their Light ſhine before Men, for the Example of others, and the Glory of of God. A Nice Point for Good Works to be done ſo, as to be ſeen, and not that they may be ſeen. And yet ſo it is, that whoever does good, propoſing to himſelf the Commendation and Applauſe of Men, cuts off the entail, of whatever, otherwiſe, would be a Reward of ſuch Good.

What then is to be the Rule? No other, but what Chriſt has appointed: Chriſtians are to do good, to be a Light to their Neighbour, and that God may be glorified; this is the extent of their Commiſſion; by this is to be regulated all they do; the Edification of their Neighbour, and the Glory of God, muſt give Life to all their Actions; and all the Projects muſt be ſtifled, which are deſign'd for earthly Greatneſs, and have nothing, but Self-love and Pride to ſpur them on. Hence are to be avoided all Self-commendations; Applauſe is not to be ſought in Good Works, no Intereſt is to be made for

for Church Preferment: If ſome State is to be allow'd, yet none ought to be lov'd; if Decency requires ſome Ornaments, Pride ought not to be the Interpreter, how far this ought to go: If a Numerous Family demands a Plentiful Proviſion, Magnificence ought not to furniſh the Table,: If Servants are to be commanded it is not to be with an Imperious Haughtineſs: If Failings are to be reprov'd, it is not to be with Contempt or Self-eſteem.

Thus Pride is to be baniſh'd, as induſtriouſly as we can; all is to be done without Noiſe and Flutter; the Soul is to be kept Humble, the Contempt and Reproach of Men is not to be regarded; and by this way of appearing but Inconſiderable, are Chriſtians to hope for that Greatneſs, which is the Fruit of Humility, and much more to the purpoſe, than that which the World gives, being the Effect of Pride, a Fruit only ſuperficial, and no more laſting than its Root.

This is thy Goſpel, O Jeſus; 'tis that which Chriſtians pretend to follow; but they ſeem to have another Goſpel, even that which the World preaches to them, which is the Rule of their Conduct. But I know, there is no Salvation, but from thine; and that if an Angel ſhould come and teach any other, I ought not to hear it. Make me ſteddy therefore I beſeech thee

thee, to thy Saving Truths, and let not the World ſo prevail on me, as to forſake what thou haſt taught. This is my ſincere Deſire, and may thy Grace confirm me in this Good Will, that I may never ſeek either the Eſteem or Greatneſs of the World, but in an Humble Spirit, ever confeſs my own Miſery, and never think of any other Greatneſs, but thy Self.

Septuageſima-Sunday.

GOSPEL,

Mat. C. 20. V. 1. ends V. 16.

GO *you alſo into my Vineyard.* The Subject of this Goſpel, is a Parable of the Maſter, who finding Men ſtanding Idle in the Market, at ſeveral Hours of the Day, reprov'd them for their Idleneſs, and ſent them to work in his Vineyard. A Seaſonable Leſſon for this time, when being call'd upon by the Church to prepare for *Lent*, now approaching, we may conſider the Work we have to do, and enter into ſerious Reſolutions of undertaking it in Obedience to his Commands and Mercy, who this Day begins to Summon us to work.

As many as are Chriſtians, are call'd to Labour in the Vineyard: This Vineyard is of

of a larger extent to ſome than others: Thoſe, who have the Charge of Souls, have the greater Task, becauſe they are not only to work for their own Sanctification, but alſo of as many others, as they have Souls under their Care. Hence the Labour they are call'd to, becomes immenſe; Firſt, in fitting themſelves for their Obligation, both in acquiring Learning and the better Qualifications of Grace, which are abſolutely Neceſſary for the Diſcharge of the Paſtoral Function. 2dly, In giving Aſſiſtance to thoſe under their Charge, both in Inſtruction, Comforting, Reproving and Exhorting, and ever proportioning their Labour to the Neceſſities of their Flock, which being Endleſs in one way or other, their Labours muſt be ſo too. This is the Poſture of their Vineyard, and ſuch is to be their Labour; in which their is to be neither Vacation nor Diſpenſation, but what is of Force by their being diſabled. Wherefore, as for thoſe, who, are preparing for this Function, if they give not Demonſtration of an Induſtrious, Laborious and Vigorous Spirit, whatever other Advantages they may have, of Capacity, Learning, and Parts, they ſhould never have my Vote for their Promotion. Becauſe the Charge is ſuch, as cannot be ſatisfied without great Labour; and to Preſent ſuch as are of an Idle, Slothful,

and

and Sluggiſh Temper, and give little hopes of Change, is to ſay, I chooſe thoſe for great Labour, whom I think not fit or likely to Labour. Who would do thus, if he had Work of his own to be done? Why therefore ſhall ſuch be choſen to work in Chriſt's Vineyard? And as for thoſe, who have already undertaken the Charge; and yet live, in a manner, Idle, I can only Pity and Pray for them, and deſire the ſame Charity of others, that they may foreſee that Evening, when all are to be call'd to receive their Pay, and conſider in time what there's will be: For if they are reprov'd, who are found Idle in the Market, what muſt they expect, who being hir'd to work, are found Idle, in the Vineyard?

The Vineyard and Work of others is more confin'd, their Principal Buſineſs being to Cultivate their own Souls, and make them bring forth Fruit to Life Everlaſting: But however, this is a Work ſtill, which obliges all to Labour; for the Soul of Man, thro' its Natural Corruption, is like a Barren Soil, overgrown with Thorns, cover'd with Stones, without Encloſure, open to all Paſſengers, both Men and Beaſts: Thus it is render'd by its preverſe Inclinations, by its Stubborn and Carnal Paſſions, by its Eaſineſs in giving ear to the pleaſing Flatteries of Self-love, the Devil,

vil, and the World: Such is the Vineyard of all Chriſtians, and yet Barren as it is it muſt bring forth Fruit; this is their Buſineſs; for this they are call'd to work: And can this be done, without their working? A plentiful Harveſt may as reaſonably be expected from Ground, that lies Common, as Good Fruit from the Soul of Man, if he ſits ſtill with his Hands tied by Sloth, or his Mind diſſipated with Folly, Vanity, or Impertinency, ſo as to be little Sollicitous for the Work he has to do. For how ſhall he be ſecure from the Snares of Ill Company, Ill Example, and a Deceitful World, if he be not daily watchful againſt their Treacherous Attempts? How ſhall his Deſires and Paſſions be ſubjected to the Government of Reaſon and Faith, if inſtead of Labouring, by Self-denials to bring them into Subjection, he feeds their Corruption by undue Liberties, and daily ſtrengthens them in their Rebellion? How ſhall he diſcover his own Weakneſſes, if he takes no Care to obſerve them? How is he to expect help from above, if he be not Solicitous in ſeeking it? How ſhall he abound in good Works, if the obtaining thoſe Virtues are no part of his Concern, which are the Seed, from whence they muſt grow?

Hence appears the Neceſſity of complying with the Command given to every Chriſtian,

Chriſtian, of *Go and Work in the Vine yard*. And if this Work be not the great Buſineſs of his Life; if he be not watchful over all his Ways, if he be not Induſtrious in Reading, Zealous in Prayer, Faithful in the Diſcharge of all Duties, Reſolute in Mortifying his Interior Corruption, Couragious in ſtanding againſt all Aſſaults, the Vineyard muſt neceſſarily be Barren, the want of Fruit will be the Condemnation of his being an Idle Servant, and that having receiv'd a Command of working, he has not work'd.

Hence let all thoſe Chriſtians call themſelves to an Account, whoſe Life being a continual Diſſipation of Thought, betwixt Vanities, Divertiſements, and Entertainments, who being Fond of Company, and the World, are Sollicitous to comply with its Extravagant Ways, and to purchaſe its Favour, and their own Senſual Satisfactions, at any Expence: Thoſe too, who ſpend their Days in Sleeping, Dreſſing, Eating, Viſiting and Gaming: And thoſe likewiſe, whoſe whole Time is engroſs'd by their Worldly and Covetous Cares, ſo as to give little or no place to the Concern of their Souls; let all theſe, I ſay, call themſelves to an Account, and if they do not find their Vineyards overgrown with thorns, that is, their Souls remarkably Vicious; yet, without the Spirit of Prophecy

phecy, one may foretel, there is ſcarcity of that good Fruit, which is expected from the Vineyards of Chriſt. For when I know there is ſome Work not to be effected, but by much Labour; and am ſenſible, there has been little Care and Pains us'd by thoſe that undertook it, 'tis obvious enough to conclude, the Work is not done. This muſt be the Caſe of theſe Chriſtians; they ſeldom are ſo Induſtrious in any Affair of their Souls, as to ſeem to be Serious, or in earneſt with it; where then can be the Fruit, which requires all the Watchfulneſs and full ſtrength of a Laborious Soul? No, they are Idle, they work not, and therefore, 'tis no Raſhneſs to ſay, their Work is not done.

But where the moſt ſerious Endeavours are us'd, the Sincere Chriſtian is not to be diſcourag'd, if he finds ſtill more Work to do: For the Work of the Soul is like that of the Vineyard, never at an end. There will be ſtill a neceſſity of new Endeavours, of Cutting off what is ſuperfluous, of Digging, Manuring, Fencing, Watching: For why ſhould Men be call'd to Work in the Vineyard to the end of the Day, if the Work were not likely to laſt to the end of the Day? This therefore is the Condition of the Chriſtian's Hire, to work till Evening, that is, till the Night of Death cloſes his Eyes; and he is neither

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to be tir'd with his Labour, nor diſcourag'd at the new Occaſions of it; for as this repeated Labour makes a good Vintage, ſo it makes the Soul Fruitful. And tho' there may appear ſometimes Weeds ſhooting up, tho' there may be ſome barren and ſuperfluous Branches, yet there may be a good Vintage ſtill, if theſe are not neglected, but taken Care of in time; ſo likewiſe in the Soul tho' Weeds appear, tho' ſome dry and barren Branches, tho' Beaſts break in, yet if theſe are not favour'd, but made the Subject of the Chriſtian's Labour, there may be ſtill good Fruit to recommend it to the Maſter of the Vineyard.

All then are to Work, and if they are but Faithful from the time they are call'd, whether Early, or at Mid-day, or at the laſt Hour, they will all receive their Hire, the Laſt as well as the Firſt, and no Idleneſs, Antecedent to the Call, will be any Diſappointment in the Pay. This is the Aſſurance Chriſt himſelf has given, and is enough to baniſh all Anxious Fears, occaſion'd by looking back on paſt Diſorders. This is the Leſſon, O Jeſus, thou giveſt us this Day; give us likewiſe Grace to follow it, that all Sloth and Idleneſs being Baniſh'd from thy Vineyard, we may all be Faithful Labourers, that holding on with Patience till the Evening comes, we may

may then be found at Work, and receive that Hire, which being promis'd by thy Mercy, thy Juſtice cannot deny us.

Sexageſima-Sunday.

GOSPEL,

Luke C. 8. V. 4. ends. V. 15.

THE *Seed is the Word of God*: But this Seed, however good in it Self, brings not forth Fruit, but according to the Diſpoſition of the Heart, that receives it. The Seed, mention'd in this Parable, was as good, which fell amongſt Thorns, Stony-places, and by the Way-ſide, as that which fell upon good Ground; and while there it is Barren, and here appears in a plentiful Harveſt, the Difference is in the Earth, and not in the Seed. This Parable was plainly verified in the Word of Chriſt himſelf, and of his Apoſtles, who Preaching to great numbers, and all alike having their Ears open to their Doctrine, in ſome it brought forth Fruit, and in others none. Many of the People, who were Sincere, and not having their Hearts prevented by any Paſſion, admiring what they heard and ſaw, and becoming Followers of Chriſt; whilſt the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, being over-rul'd by Pride, Intereſt, and Human Reſpects, put wrong

Conſtructions

Conſtructions on all that was ſaid or done, and thus grew more Obſtinate under all the Evidence of Truth and Miracles.

Is not this enough to awaken all Chriſtians, and, whilſt they ſeek for Truth, either for the Modelling of their Conſciences by a right Faith, or of the Lives, by the Will of God, to oblige them to put their Hearts into a Diſpoſition of ſuch Sincerity and Reſolution, that neither Careleſneſs, Paſſion, or any Worldly Conſideration, ſhall make Exceptions againſt that way, where the Force of Truth and Right ſeems to lead them? Thus it ought to be, for otherwiſe, there needs no more to make void the Ordinary Means of Grace; and a Chriſtian, that has had all the Opportunities of receiving Light, will, like the *Phariſees*, die in the dark. This is the Unhappy Fate of too many, who, by the Viſits of a particular Grace, having heard and read enough, for the Converſion of a Heathen, ſtand out againſt all ſuch Attempts of Mercy, upon the Force of ſome Impreſſions, which Education or Fear only had made in them; which putting a ſtrong Byaſs on the Judgment, wholly carry it out of the way; and ſo that Truth, which at firſt ſeem'd to touch them, becomes Fruitleſs, as to all the Good, that was deſign'd them.

But

But what then are to be the Diſpoſitions of the Heart, that God's word may take Root in it? It is not to be harden'd, like the High-way, nor open to every thing that paſſes; for in ſuch a Heart it makes no Impreſſion, but will be ſoon trampled under Foot, or carried away by the next Impertinency, that occurs. It muſt not be diſorder'd with any Violence of Paſſion, which, like ſtony Ground, will not permit the Seed to take Root. It muſt not be diſturb'd with an Immoderate Sollicitude for any thing that is Worldly, whether Pleaſure, Riches, or the common Concerns of Life, becauſe theſe, like Thorns, will choak it, and quite prevent its growth.

Theſe are the Cautions, given in this Goſpel: How great then ought to be the Chriſtians Care! He has no Hopes of Salvotion, but from God's Word, bringing forth Fruit in his Soul: There is no true Faith, but what is the Fruit of this, and without this Fruit he certainly abides in Error: There can be no Light or Steddineſs for walking in the Way of God's Commandments, but what muſt be the Fruit of this; and without it, he unavoidably walks in the Dark, and goes out of the Way. What Judgment then is to be made of all thoſe, who have their Hearts open to all manner of Diſſipations, their

Heads

Heads turn'd with good Fortune, or buſied in all kind of amuſing Follies? What of thoſe, whoſe Paſſions are ſo ſtrong, that tho' they renounce not all Exerciſes of Piety, yet 'tis ever within ſuch Bounds, that they ſeem to compound with Heaven, leaving a Reſerve for ſuch Exceptions, as their Paſſions make? And what of thoſe, whoſe buſy Souls are ſo overwhelm'd with Temporal Concerns, that tho' they have Light enough to ſee, yet have not Liberty to think, or be ſerious in what's Eternal; but whenever this begins to preſs, there is ſtill ſome neceſſary Buſineſs to put it by, till another time, and yet this time they cannot find? I wiſh there were place to judge favourably of them, or that they had Reaſon to do it of themſelves; but this Goſpel allows of no ſuch Favour, and ſhews, that all their Hopes are vain, in pronouncing their Indiſpoſitions to be ſuch, as hinders the Word of God to be Fruitful in them; and whence then can their Salvation come?

Here then may Chriſtians ſee what their preſent Obligation is, and what muſt be the Work of the Approaching *Lent*. In this Imperfect State there cannot be expected either a total Application to things Divine, or an Abſolute Exemption from Diſorder'd Paſſions, or the Diſtracting World; theſe Difficulties are the Inſepa-

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rable Conditions of this Life; but ſince they cannot be divided from them, it muſt be their Buſineſs, not to be overcome by them. If Nature be heavy, unwilling to look up, and more unwilling to take Pains, in Labouring to be Good, it muſt be ſpur'd on, and forc'd, even againſt Inclination: For if Temper be averſe to all that's Pious, and Humour takes Place of every Exerciſe, that's capable of mending it, what muſt be the Conſequence, but that the Natural Man will be ſtrengthned in his Corruption, and all the Buſineſs of Eternity brought into Deſpair? And muſt not thoſe then, who find this Difficulty thus prevailing in them, uſe ſome ſuitable Means to overcome it? Truly if they give not ſome Check to the Diſtractions of their Vain, Curious, and Unprofitable Thoughts, and learn not to be ſerious in what concerns their Soul, not only ſo, as to Read ſometimes and Pray, but likewiſe to make this a Buſineſs, to conſider upon the Diſpoſition of their Hearts, ſee what their Diſorders are, and what muſt be their Help; they muſt be number'd amongſt thoſe Unhappy Ones, who, figur'd by the High-way, are never like to bring forth Fruit.

If Nature be ſubject to Prevailing Paſſions, ſuch as not only diſturb, (for this may be the Caſe of the beſt Chriſtian) but alſo

alſo carry the Heart with them thro' Forbidden Ways; ſo that tho' ſome Duties are ſtill perform'd, yet ſeldom any that interfere with theſe; what muſt the Chriſtian do? If he ſits ſtill in Peace, as if all were well, he is certainly unhappy; and whatever Fruit appears in him, it will be never ſuch, as can be fit for Harveſt. No, he muſt, by watchful Induſtry and Labour ſtrive to overcome thoſe Paſſions, which make him ſo often tranſgreſs the Law of God; and till he has gain'd ſo far, as to ſtand againſt their Treacherous Suggeſtions, his Character can be no better, than that of the Stony Ground; which tho' receiving Seed, will ſtill be Barren, as to that Fruit, which is expected from him.

If a Worldly Solicitude takes up the Soul, and it be bent with too much Eagerneſs, either to gratifie an Idle or Covetous Temper, 'tis all one what the Buſineſs is; for ſince the Powers of the Soul are ſo confin'd, that any Immoderate and Conſtant Care for Earth, renders impracticable the Concern for Heaven, as long as this undue Solicitude remains, the beſt Seed muſt here be Fruitleſs; and there can be no Remedy, but in Moderating this Concern, and bringing the Mind to a juſter Temper. If Earth has its Buſineſs, has not Heaven its Buſineſs too? And if the greater be wholly ſwallow'd up by that

that, which ought to be the leſs, is not here Injuſtice in all this Life? And where can the Fruit be, when the good Seed is thus daily choak'd up by Thorns and Weeds?

Here then is the Chriſtian's Task; if the Seeds of God's Word be not Fruitful in him, he is certainly miſerable; there are many things to prevent its Growth, and there can be no Security againſt Miſcarriages, but from his Watchfulneſs and Labour. This Spirit thou muſt give us, O God; help us therefore by thy Heavenly Grace; and ſince our Dangers here are ſo many ways multiplied, let thy Gifts be our Preſervation, that neither by Careleſneſs, Paſſions, or Immoderate Sollicitude for Earthly Things, we may diſappoint the Deſigns of thy Goodneſs towards us; but having our Hearts diſpos'd by thy Grace, we may, like good Earth, bring forth plentiful Fruit of all we receive.

Quinquageſima-Sunday.

GOSPEL,

Luke C. 18. V. 31. to the end.

Behold we go up to Jeruſalem. They are the Words of Chriſt to his Apoſtles; who having taken them apart

from the Multitude, puts them in mind of all he was to ſuffer at *Jeruſalem*, and of his Approaching Paſſion. This Goſpel is made choice of at this time, as a ſeaſonable Leſſon to the Faithful, to inform them, that as Chriſt always walk'd with his Death in View, and made this the Diſpoſition of his whole Life, to accompliſh the Order of his Father; ſo they, more eſpecially at this time, ought to call their Thoughts to the Remembrance of Death, and make their beſt Preparation for it.

For this end the Church ſets up this Day the Bloody Standerd; and by preſenting them with a lively View of Chriſt's Sufferings, ſhews them the Cauſe in which they are engag'd, the manner in which they are to fight, and the only Hopes, by which they are to expect a Victory, ſo as to triumph with Chriſt over Sin and Death. In this firſt, reproaching their Abſurd Prophaneneſs, who taking now greater Liberties than uſual in all that can be call'd Extravagant; by Gluttony, prepare for Faſting; by Exceſs, for Self-Denials; and by Prodigality, for helping the Poor. This is a Cuſtom, which from our Genteel Predeceſſors, has been tranſmitted down to our Days; and tho' diſapprov'd, and ſtrongly oppoſed by the Labours of Pious Paſtors, is ſtill ſupported by

by Numbers; and even has thoſe to favour it, in a modeſt way, whoſe Piety ſhould give them an Abhorrence of all ſuch Practices; ſo that whilſt Chriſt calls to *Jeruſalem*, where the Son of Man is to be Mock'd, Scourg'd and Crucified, they are ſo far from joining with him, in Sentiments of Grief, for what he ſuffers, that by their Sinful Extravagancies, they ſeem to take part with the *Jews*, in helping to Mock, Scourge and Crucify him. For what is it but a Mockery, ſo groſly to pervert the Deſign of the Church at this time? Were the Sins of theſe few abus'd Days to be laid open, I fear there wou'd appear all that, which the Apoſtle declares to be Crucifying Chriſt again, and trampling on his Blood. As many then as have any Reſpect for the Church, and true Concern for themſelves, I think, ought to give Ear to the preſent Summons, and not run then more perverſly into *Babylon*, when they are call'd to go up to *Jeruſalem*.

But what, is it to go up to *Jeruſalem*? It is to accompany Chriſt in the ſame Diſpoſition, with which he went up at this time, that is, with his Thoughts on Death, and all he was to ſuffer as a Preparation to it. The Faithful are to conſider in particular, what he ſuffer'd, and reflecing, how much he made, both his Sufferings and Death the Subject of his

Thoughts, for the better Accompliſhment of his Fathers Will, then ſee whether the ſame Method be not more neceſſary for them, that when the Hour comes, for the Execution of that Sentence, which is already pronounc'd againſt them, of going out of this World, they may be in a good Preparation for ſubmitting to it,

Our Natural Corruption, and the daily Indiſpoſitions, which are too apt to grow upon us, by our Commerce with the World, and with the Occaſions of Sin, encreaſe the Difficulties of dying well, rend'ring a due Preparation for it ſo very neceſſary, that they muſt raſhly depend on undeſerved Miracles, who entertain Hopes of a happy Death, without preparing for it by daily Thoughts, and Endeavours, ſuitable to ſo great a Change.

For dying well, the Soul ought to have ſuch a Command over all its Paſſions, as to keep ſteddy to the Law of God, notwithſtanding all the Powerful Solicitations that invite to Sin; ſo that it knows how to deſpiſe the Charms of Pleaſures, Intereſt and Ambition, and cannot approve of any thing that is not licens'd by Heaven. It ought to come to ſuch a Degree of Indifferency, as to Earthly Things, as notwithſtanding its ſtrongeſt Ties, to be in a Readineſs of forſaking all. It ought

ought to have a Contempt of the World, a Deſire of being united with God. It ought to have a Sincere Deteſtation for all paſt Sins; a Reſolution of doing Right to Juſtice, in puniſhing them, and a perpetual Watchfulneſs for preventing all Relapſes.

Now let any Chriſtian, that is ſenſible of our common Weakneſs and Corruption, conſider, whether it be reaſonable to leave the Concern of Dying well, to the Hazards of the laſt Hour, or whether there be not a Neceſſity of making a long Preparation for it. They, who know how difficult a Task it is, to bring all Paſſions into a due Subjection, to work the Soul into a true Deteſtation of what it naturally loves, to be in a Readineſs, not only of forſaking Earth, but ſo as to be fitted for Heaven; know too, that according to the ordinary Methods of Grace, Time and Labour is neceſſary for this Work; and that for this end, all that ſeriouſly think of it, ought now to go up to *Jeruſalem*, and from the Sufferings of Chriſt, take a model of what they are to do.

He was wounded for our Iniquities, he was wounded to heal us; but ſince the Apoſtle informs us, that Chriſt ſuffer'd, leaving us an Example, we are not ſo to reſt in his Wounds, as to believe his Sufferings to be our Exemption, but

our Pattern; and ſuch an one, as will certainly give a Value to whatever we undertake by his example, and render it effectual with God; and thus we are to make his Death the beſt Preparation for ours. Since therefore he was Mock'd, Spit on, Scourg'd and Crucified, and by theſe Sufferings, were puniſh'd in his Sacred Perſon our Offences, we are now to follow the Copy, and turn theſe very Inſtruments of the Divine Juſtice againſt our ſelves, for the Remedy of our Diſorders, with this Confidence, that what we do by the Direction of that Choice, which God made for the Remedy and Puniſhment of Sin, and by the Example of Chriſt ſuffering for Sin, will not fail of having good a Effect in us.

Here then may every good Chriſtian; having firſt view'd Chriſt under all his Paſſion, turn to himſelf, and ſay, It is I who have ſinn'd; all this weight of Puniſhment ought to have faln upon me; and now ſome part of it muſt fall, that ſo my paſt Sins may be puniſh'd, as Juſtice requires, and Proviſion made againſt thoſe Dangers, which are occaſion'd by the Wilful Indulgence of my Natural Corruption. I am no more to be a Jew, in Mocking, Spitting at, Scourging, and Crucifying Chriſt; but I am to give Proof of my being a Chriſtian, in turning all this, where

where it is due, againſt my own Sins, and thoſe Paſſions, which put me in hazard of Relapſe. I will now begin to mock my own Paſſions, and ſpit at them in Scorn; in all their Attempts I will ſay, What! Are you to govern a Soul, redeem'd by the Blood of Chriſt? Do you expect ſtill to command? No, bow down Rebellious Evils, and be ſubject to him, who is the Lord of all; you are Slaves, and muſt Obey. The Will of God is my Law, and to this muſt bend all that is within me. If you are ſtubborn, and ſtill claim the Power you have ſo long uſurp'd, the Scourge ſhall be my Help; my Fleſh and Self-will, which you have gratified, ſhall, by repeated Mortifications, ſuffer in Proportion to the Satisfaction you have given them, and thus learn to be afraid of Sin. I have now begun, and there ſhall be no Truce, till I have Crucified all that is Corrupt. It was not the Jews, but you, Crucified the Lord of all; your own Contrivance ſhall now fall on your own Heads; and tho' you have the Devil and World Confederate, their Power ſhall not prevail againſt him that ſtrengthens me, but all ſhall be Crucified with you.

Thus muſt Chriſtians, by viewing their Dying Lord, learn to prepare for Death;

there's no other Way for doing it well; and now being the time, when the Church ſummons all to Prayer, Faſting and doing Penance for Sins; ought not this to be the great Taſk of this Holy Time that, by a Separation from Sin and all that diſpoſes to it; they may renew the Memory of Chriſt's Death, and prepare for their own? 'Tis a hard thing to turn our Hands againſt our ſelves; but if all our Dangers are from our ſelves, and our Paſſions be our greateſt Enemies, what muſt we do? Either they muſt be brought into Subjection, or we be overcome by them. This is our Caſe: Help us therefore, O God; and ſince the Time thou now granteſt, is the Effect of thy Mercy; give us Grace to make the beſt Uſe of it, in puniſhing Sin, and reforming the Sinner, leſt by neglecting this, we may never more have Opportunity of Providing againſt Death, but be at length found unprepar'd.

Aſh-Wedneſday.

GOSPEL,

Mat. C. 6. V. 16. ends V. 21.

LAY up to your ſelves Treaſures in Heaven. A reaſonable Advice for all thoſe who believe an Eternity to come; for

for if after this Life we are to enter into a State, that ſhall have no End, is it not juſt, we ſhould make Proviſion for it, ſince the ſame Faith which informs us of that State, likewiſe aſſures us that we can expect nothing there, but Everlaſting Poverty, if we provide not againſt it, by ſending Treaſures before us? Our Time of being in this Life cannot be long, and yet how great is our Solicitude, in laying in Stores for a Defence againſt Neceſſity and Misfortunes? This Care is reaſonable, becauſe of the many Uncertanties of this Life; and if we come to want, we know not how we ſhall bear it, or what Aſſiſtance we ſhall then find for our Relief; and therefore the beſt Diſcretion is, to be Induſtrious, in making timely Proviſion againſt all Accidents. What then ought to be our Care in regard of the Life to come? We believe, that to be eternal; we believe the Miſeries of it intollerable; we believe theſe can no other way be prevented, but by our Prudent Management of this Life, and by the Treaſures we ſend before us; and that if we fail in this, ſo as to die unprovided, it will not then be poſſible for any Friend to help us. Is it not this we believe? And can there then be a more ſeaſonable Advice, than what the Church this Day gives us from the mouth of Chriſt

himself; lay up to your selves Treasures in Heaven? It is he gives it, who best knows the Necessities of the Life to come, and what will then be the Misery of Careless and Unprovident Souls, who putting this to the Hazard, certainly run into them: There is great Mercy therefore in the Advice, and the Neglect of it must be a Contempt of Mercy; and such, that whatever be the Reputation of Christians, as to this World, they can be no better than Fools, as to Eternity, if they do not follow it.

See then, Christians, how your Accompts stand; have you Treasures already laid up in Heaven? Or, are you there in Debt? All the Disorders of your past Life, all the Sins of Pride, Self-love, Sensuality, Intemperance, Prodigality, all the Neglect of Eternity, with the rest unknown, what must these be reckon'd? These are no other Treasures, but of Wrath; they are so many Debts, and who knows whether they do not yet stand in full against you, notwithstanding all your suppos'd Repentance? And what then, if you should be summon'd out of this Life, and now, as you are, to begin Eternity? Can you with Reason hope, you shall find your Treasures already laid up, such as will be your Defence against Everlasting Misery?

This

This is the Concern of the Church at preſent; who ſenſible of the great Neglect of her Children, like a careful Mother now calls upon you, that by preſent Induſtry you would now lay up Treaſures, and prevent the Miſchiefs of all your paſt ill Management. Now you enter upon a Time proper for diſcharging old Debts, and laying up Treaſures in Heaven.

You have an Opportunity, in the Ceremony of this Day, of Humbling your ſelves before God, and making an Acknowledgment of your being nothing better than ſinful Duſt. If this be perform'd with a Senſe of true Humility, ſuch as ought to be the Fruit now of your paſt Sins, how might this contribute, Firſt, to the Cancelling all thy Debts contracted by Pride, Vanity, Self-love, Stubbornneſs, Arrogancy, Preſumption, with infinite other Branches of this ſo unhappily Fruitful Root? Give but one ſerious Glance at theſe, and ſee if the Horror of them, ariſing from the Conſideration of Contemptible Duſt, that has been thus blindly Preſumtuous, and of the Infinite Majeſty of a Powerful and Loving God, againſt whom it has rebelliouſly lifted up its Head, be not enough now to oblige you to humble your ſelves, in the Confeſſion of a real Unworthineſs, ſuch as ought to caſt you, in your own Thoughts, beneath

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all that is created, and fix ſuch a Senſe of your Miſery, as may be a Bar againſt Pride for the time to come.

Then, Secondly, how might this be the Foundation of a Treaſure in Heaven, ſince God has ſufficiently manifeſted how acceptable true Humility is to him, how Powerful it is, in drawing down Plenty of Heavenly Bleſſings; and that as it obliges him to be favourable, ſo likewiſe to prepare Seats of Glory for thoſe, who thus, from the Senſe of his Infinite Mercies, and their own Sins, acknowledege their Ingratitude, under preſent Bleſſings, and Unworthineſs of all future Happineſs.

Begin then, Chriſtians, thus to pay old Debts, and lay up a Treaſure, and ſee daily to encreaſe it by the Exerciſes of this Holy Time. Faſting will encreaſe it, Prayer will encreaſe it, Alms will encreaſe it, Works of Mercy and Juſtice will encreaſe it, all manner of Self-Denials will encreaſe it. But then all theſe ought to be undertaken in Obedience to God's Will, and offer'd to him; thus he will own them as depoſited in his Hands, and one Day will give a Faithful Account of the Truſt. To undertake and perform them in this manner, is therefore to be a Principal Part of your Care; for otherwiſe, they may only ſerve to encreaſe the

the Debt, inſtead of becoming a Treaſure. If you Faſt, Pray, and give Alms, as the *Phariſees* did, to gain Reputation with Men; this will not be received by God, but be rejected by him. If you go on in the common Track of the World, which has perverted all the Pious Inſtitutions of God and his Church, mixing Senſe and Appetite with all it undertakes, and turning the Frugality of *Lent*, into the grateful Entertainments of Prodigality and Gluttony, where will your Reward be, but with the World? If you be not watchful againſt the Occaſions of Sin, but go on in all your wonted Liberties, ſuch as are moſt indulgent to Corruption, ſuch as feed and enflame it; if you cut not off your Idle and Unneceſſary Expences, both of Money and Time, but ſtill gratifie Inclination with what ought to be the Support of your Souls, in Retirement and of the Poor in a Charitable Relief; if Vanity, Extravagance and Humour are as induſtriouſly favour'd in *Lent*, as formerly, where will your Treaſure be, when all Accounts being made up, you have been only ſo civil to Heaven, as to complement it with a Ceremony, but have made it, at the ſame time your Buſineſs to give Encouragement to all that, which was contrary to the Intereſt of Heaven?

What

What therefore muſt you do, but conſider your Selves as Criminals, condemn'd by the Juſtice of God, and yet with the Favour of ſome Time allow'd you, for reverſing the Sentence? Such are you to reckon this time, we this Day begin; and are not you then ſo to undertake the Exerciſes of it, that they may be available for this end? If you have a true Senſe of your paſt Offences, and ſo Faſt, that it may be a Puniſhment of the Offenders; if you own Time miſ-ſpent, and now labour to redeem it; if you acknowledge the Danger of your Paſſions, and by due Self-denials endeavour to overcome them; if you confeſs the Divine Juſtice provok'd againſt you, and by Prayer, Alms, and Tears, are Solicitous to turn away the Wrath of God from you, you have, in this Method, juſt Hopes, from the Promiſes and Mercy of God, of accompliſhing what you deſire. God himſelf has given the Encouragement in ſo many Sinners; who, by this way, have found Favour with him; and taking the Advantage of ſuch a Reprieve, which is now granted you, have not only prevented the Execution of Judgment, but thro' the Divine Goodneſs; heap'd up to themſelves Treaſures of Mercy. Grant us all, O God, thy Grace; that as we experience thy Goodneſs in the time thou yet giveſt us

for

for Repentance, ſo we may make ſuch a Uſe of this time, as to obtain Pardon of our Sins, and, at our Death, find ſuch a Treaſure laid up, as to ſecure us, thro' thy Infinite Mercy, againſt all the Dangers of Everlaſting Miſery.

First Sunday in LENT.

GOSPEL,

Mat. C. 4. V. 1. ends. V. 11.

JEſus was led by the Spirit into the Deſart, to be tempted by the Devil. It ſeems ſomething ſurprizing to find the Son of God Incarnate ſo many ways, and with ſuch Violence aſſaulted by the Devil, as is here related in this Goſpel; but when, by S. *Gregory*'s Direction, we conſider how much he ſuffer'd from thoſe, who were Members of the Devil, how much from *Pilate*, how much from the Soldiers, how much from the Jews, we cannot wonder at Chriſt's being tempted by the Devil, and carried up into a Mountain; who, by his Members, permitted himſelf to be Crucified. But all the Indignities he ſuffers are the Effect of his Love to us, and the Encreaſe of our Obligation to him, being all deſign'd for our Good. He dies a Sacrifice upon the Croſs for our Redemption, and he is tempted for our Inſtruction

Instruction. In this we are taught, that Temptation is unavoidable in a Christian Life; that there is no degree of Virtue, even that which approaches neareſt to the Life of Christ, is privileg'd againſt it; and that the Means of reſiſting it, is not for Christians to ſuppoſe they ſhall not be tempted, but to learn from Christ what is the moſt effectual way for ſtanding againſt it. Hence the wiſe Man gives his Advice in theſe Terms; Son, upon embracing the Service of God, ſtand firm in Juſtice and Fear, and prepare thy Soul for Temptation. It is then a general Order, whereby God declares it his Will, that excepting Infants, who dye before the Uſe of Reaſon, none ſhall be ſav'd, but by Combat, and being Victorions, like Chriſt, over the Devil.

It is by this way of being prov'd with Difficulties and Storms, Chriſtian Souls become Reſolute, Conſtant and Couragious. Their Actions would be leſs Vigorous by Reſt and Calm; and by Uniformity, Cuſtom would ſoon take place of Reaſon. If the Soul were not awaken'd by the neceſſity of reſiſting Temptation, it would fall, by the very weight of Nature, into the moſt dangerous of all Temptations, that is, of performing its Exercises of Piety, without any Interior Motion, and by meer Cuſtom only; ſo that

that inſtead of being ſtrengthned by Peace, it would inſenſibly contract a Weakneſs, ſuch as would render it uncapable of ſatisfying any Duties, that had but the leaſt Difficulties to diſcourage it in the Proſecution.

Beſides, the Soul, thro' Self-Love, being too forward, to think the good Diſpoſitions, it finds in it ſelf, to be of its own Stock, and that it can command them at Pleaſure, a perfect Peace would confirm it in this dangerous Miſtake, and bring it, by degrees, to be inſenſible of its own Weakneſs, and of any neceſſary Dependance it has on God; it would take all that for Natural, which it could do without Pain, without Contradiction and Combat. So that this way, which God has choſen, is the moſt effectual Means, for keeping Chriſtians in a due Knowledge of themſelves, and of God, and for perfecting them in all Virtues, ſuch as are neceſſary for bringing them to a State of Everlaſting Peace.

From this Order of Providence, and the Example of Chriſt, Sincere and Pious Chriſtians may find Grounds for Comfort amidſt Temptations, ſo at leaſt, as not to be dejected, tho' there be a continued Violence in the Aſſault, and the greateſt Horror in the Impreſſions; for what can be more abominable in it ſelf, than that which

which was here ſuggeſted to Chriſt, of Self-murther, and worſhiping the Devil for Intereſt and Ambition? What can be more repeated than in the Succeſſion of thoſe Deteſtable Offers that were made him? And if all theſe were conſiſtent with his Infinite Sanctity, ſo as not to caſt the leaſt Suſpicion of Blemiſh upon him; may not Chriſtians here ſatisfy themſelves, that the worſt of Temptations, tho' they are Trials of Vertue, can be no Prejudice to it, if, like their Head, they reſiſt and expreſs their Abhorrence of them? They carry with them indeed the Evidence of the Devil's Malice; but this being External, and they wholly Paſſive, there can be no more Guilt in it, than in other Sinful Offers made by wicked Men, the Devil's Members, to chaſte Souls, which they renounce, and hear not, but with Diſlike, and an Abhorrence of the Propoſal. Here then fearful Souls ought to take Courage, and learn not to be frighted at the moſt Impious and Filthy Temptations. To be dejected, or immoderately diſturb'd at them, may be injurious to Virtue, in bringing both Darkneſs upon the Soul, and Weakneſs on the Spirits, and rend'ring it leſs Vigorous in its beſt Undertakings; but to ſtand its Ground, and contemn them, may afford Matter of Joy in the Experience of a tried Fidelity.

Secondly,

Secondly, From this Example of Chriſt, may Chriſtians learn how to diſpoſe themſelves, for making Reſiſtance againſt Temptations, and what are the beſt Preparations for triumphing over ſo dangerous an Enemy as him, who here made his Attempt upon Chriſt, and will not fail to do the like on his followers. In his Example they may obſerve Two Principal ones, Retreat and Faſting, both very proportion'd for making the beſt Defence.

Retreat, is entring into a kind of Solicitude with Chriſt; and tho' this can be practic'd by very few, ſo as to ſeperate from the World; yet there are very few, who cannot practice it in ſuch a manner, at leaſt, as may contribute very much to their Security. For the great Danger of moſt Chriſtians ariſing from their unneceſſary Commerce from the World, ſuch as is deſign'd to gratifie Appetite, Inclination and Humour, may not this be cut off? And for all that Converſation, which is ſinful, or diſorderly, may not here be made great Retrenchments? As for thoſe Diſcourſes, which ſerve only to promote what is Vain, Idle, and Extravagant, is not here Place for ſtricter Diſcipline? Much might be done here by Perſons of all Ranks, and much to their Advantage. For as thoſe Ideas, which the Devil makes

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uſe of in all Temptations, become more Lively and Vigorous, by being frequently renew'd, in what we ſee and hear; ſo they grow leſs Active, and dull in thoſe, who ceaſe to renew them, and by ſeaſonable withdrawing from unneceſſary Converſation, endeavour to apply their Minds to better Objects. This is the advantage we may make of the Narrowneſs of our Souls in this Life: Few things are enough to fill it; and hence, as the Application to the World baniſhes from it the Thoughts of God, ſo in applying it ſelf to the Truths of God, the Impreſſions of Worldly Things are much weaken'd in it. And may not then all Chriſtians, in a great degree, thus find away to diſarm the Devil, if at this time they would ſo far ſeek Retreat, as to let Reading and Prayer take place of that Converſation; by which, in an Indiſcreet pleaſing themſelves, they give great Advantages to the Devil, by quickning thoſe Ideas, which he afterwards fails not to turn to their Ruin.

Faſting is the other way, which, if duly perform'd, may be very helpful; for this being the Practice of a Self-Denial as to Eating and Drinking, it may put Chriſtians in the way of denying themſelves, as to all other things, which they obſerve hurtful, and the Occaſions of Sin. This is the Self-denial, which is the Firſt Princi-

Principle of the Goſpel, for ſeparating Souls from the Love of the World, and drawing them towards God; and thoſe, who are the Profeſſors of it, can have no Hopes of arriving at length at Happineſs, but by beginning here, and going on in this way. This is the Deſign of the Church, which propoſing Faſting for the Puniſhment of Sin, intends likewiſe, that Chriſtians ſhould undertake that more general Faſt, which conſiſts in a general Mortification of all dangerous Paſſions, and a Separation from all that is ſinful. The Outward Faſt is a Figure of this, and likewiſe a proper Means for coming to it, that is, of Chriſtians coming to a Command of themſelves, and bringing all that is within them, into a Subjection to Reaſon, regulated by the Will of God: And if once they come to this, how little is it, the Devil can prevail upon them with all his Snares, and the very worſt of Temptations? Thus, O God, art thou pleas'd to lead us thro' ſafe ways, and we are ſenſible how much it is our Intereſt to walk in them. Teach us but to be Sincere in what we undertake, that all may not paſs away in a meer Formality, but that Faſting as we ought, and joyning to this, both Recollection of Mind, and a Watchfulneſs over our Paſſions, we may come to that degree of Virtue,

tue, which, by thy Grace, will ſecure us againſt all Temptations, and conduct us to Happineſs.

Second Sunday *in* LENT.

GOSPEL,

Mat. C. 17. V. 1. ends V. 9.

HE *was transfigur'd before them.* The Subject of this Goſpel is the Glorious Transfiguration of our Lord, on Mount *Thabor*, in Preſence of his three Apoſtles, *Peter*, *James* and *John*, where, by the Teſtimony of Heaven, he was acknowledg'd to be the Son of God, a Command was given them to hear him, *Ipſum Audite*, and by a paſſing Glimpſe of Glory, they had a Taſt of that Happineſs, which is reſerv'd in the next Life, for the Recompence of the Juſt.

The Deſign of this Myſtery was, not only to confirm the Faith of the Apoſtles, but likewiſe to Strengthen them againſt all the Evils of this Life, by the Hopes of that Glory, which, being ſeen here only in part, made them forget all below, and with earneſtneſs deſire to be Eſtabliſh'd in it. And the ſame, I believe, is one principal Motive, why the Church, in this Time of Mourning, preſents us with this Glorious Myſtery, that by the Hopes of one

one Day coming to the Poſſeſſion of that Happineſs, which was ſo ſurprizing in the Shadow, we may with Reſolution go on thro' all thoſe difficult ways, which lead to it, and not let the trouble of preſent Mortification make us give up the Cauſe, and be the Diſappointment of all our Hopes.

Whatever therefore our Deſires be, of being deliver'd from the uneaſineſs of this Life, and being ſettl'd in an unchangeable Peace with God; we are to remember, that this can be only the Object of our Wiſhes, and that at preſent we have another Task upon our Hands, that is to hold on under all the Difficulties of a tireſome Conflict, and to wait, till God ſhall call us to the Reſt we deſire. This Inſtruction is given us in S. *Peter*, who amidſt the pleaſing Objects on this Mount, crying out; Lord, it is good for us to be here; let us make here Three Tabernacles; the Evangeliſt S. *Luke* makes this Remark upon him; That he knew not what he ſaid, *Neſciens quid diceret*; and that, amidſt this Glory, Chriſt diſcovers to him and his Companions, all the Torments of his Paſſion, he was yet to ſuffer at *Jeruſalem*. In this, informing them and us, that, tho' Happineſs is to be deſir'd, it is not to be expected, as the Portion of this Life; but that here, we are to prepare our ſelves for

for Suffering, and not for the Enjoyments of a ſettled Reſt.

If then, by Faith God gives to his Servants ſuch a Senſe of future Happineſs, as to make it deſirable; and if, by the Uncertainties, Troubles and Dangers of this Life, he encreaſes the Deſires of that happy State, ſo that, with *Peter*, they can in earneſt ſay, *Bonum eſt nos hic eſſe*; 'Tis good for us to be there; yet this is to be done with that true Submiſſion, as to be contented to go thro' all thoſe difficult ways, that lead to it, and even in the midſt of their greateſt Difficulties to ſay, 'Tis good for us to be here; becauſe, tho' it is not to be expected, that the Afflictions and dangerous Temptations of this Baniſhment ſhould be welcom, in themſelves, to Souls, that have a true Senſe of God, and a deſire of being unchangeably united to him; yet when they conſider it the Ordinance of God, that by theſe Trials and Tribulations they muſt enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, that by Weeping, Mourning, Conflicts, Darkneſs, Storms, Oppreſſions and Mortifications, they muſt be prepar'd for Eternal Reſt; on this Conſideration, they may know, how to welcom all theſe, and ſay, 'Tis good, for us to be here; 'tis good, becauſe 'tis the Will of God; 'tis good becauſe the Fruit of this Patience is the Poſſeſſion of God. With

With this Submiſſion then, ought to be temper'd all the Deſires of Heaven; and becauſe no Chriſtian can have a foreſight of what Portion God has ordain'd for them, therefore are they to offer themſelves, with all the indifferency they can, to all; and then more eſpecially, when the Perplexities of this Life, are the Temptation for deſiring a better; ſince, it may often happen, when they are moſt earneſt in wiſhing for Reſt, the Order of Heaven may have many Labours yet appointed for them, before that Reſt is to come. This was the Caſe of *Elias* the Prophet, who deeply reſenting the Sins of an Idolatrous People, tir'd with the Difficulties of his Poſt, and terrified with the Threats of *Jezebel*, fled into a Deſert, and ſitting under a Tree with this weight on his Spirits, cried out thus to God; Lord, it is enough, take my Soul from me. When, behold, an Angel comes with this Meſſage; *Ariſe and Eat, for thou haſt yet a great way to go.* He was weary of living, and deſir'd an end, when, in the Order of God, a great part of his Journey was yet to come, and upon Information, he ſubmitted to it. This was likewiſe the Caſe of *Moſes* with his Rebellious People, and afterwards of S. *Paul*, and many other Servants of God, ſet down upon Record for the Inſtruction of Chriſtians, to teach

them, how to moderate their Desires of Heaven, and then to surrender themselves with Submission to the Divine Appointments, when the Trouble of the World, or of their own restless Corruption, which will not be wholly subdued, makes Life uneasie to them.

This is to be the Rule for all Anxious, Afflicted and Dejected Souls; for the Desires of Heaven are not, in themselves, to be reprov'd, but incourag'd; yet because none know the Battels, which they are ordain'd to Fight, and a present uneasiness may be often the occasion of such Desires, therefore are they to suspect themselves, if such Wishes are sigh'd out without any Condition, and fear that 'tis not the Love of God, but Impatience, that raises them: And hence are they bound to correct such Prayers, by laying themselves proftrate before God, and with Sincerity Pray again, that, not theirs, but his Will may be done in them.

If Nature be unwilling, it must be spurr'd on by the Faith of those Eternal Goods, that are to come; Heaven must be laid before it, with the Conditions of the Purchase; by these it must be encourag'd to pursue its Course; by these is to be sweetned all present uneasiness. And in this manner must the Christian tho' comfortless and tir'd, still offer himself to new Trials. And

And this ought to be the Method of all in this Holy Time: The Exerciſes of it cannot be welcome to our Corruption, which ever bending to what pleaſes, cannot bear the denial of it, but with diſlike; and this diſlike is ſo ſtrengthen'd by a Cuſtom of favouring it, that thoſe (and who are not thoſe?) that generally walk by Inclination, ever finding Motives to make it reaſonable, cannot now think, when they are call'd to it, of contradicting it, but with ſuch difficulty, as is not eaſily to be overcome. Hence it is, there is ſuch a general remiſneſs in Faſting; great numbers ſollicite for Diſpenſations, and the true Reaſons, whatever be pretended, in too many, are nothing but a long Habit of affected Niceneſs, and the daily Study of gratifying a diſorder'd Appetite; and as for thoſe, that undertake to Faſt, 'tis with ſuch Contrivance, as to exclude all Self-denial, and even then to practice Gluttony, when they ſet up for Mortification. Hence it is, that Intemperance, and Prodigality and Vanity, with all the Liberties of a Diſtemper'd World, are as much carried on in *Lent*, as at other times; and when it ought to be the Buſineſs to make Atonement for paſt Offences, new Sins are ſtill added to the old, and the Debt daily encreas'd.

And what is the reaſon, but the difficulty of Faſting, of Self-denial, of Recollection, of breaking off ill Habits, of ſtanding againſt Inclination, and the common Corruption of the World? And why does this difficulty prevail, but becauſe the Senſe of what is preſent, is more powerful than the Promiſes of Faith? And is not this a great Fault, and even the Reproach of Chriſtians, that believing an Eternal Life to come, and that the Poſſeſſion of it depends on their Fidelity in theſe Exerciſes, they yet are ſo Careleſs in them, and this only to flatter a Poor Carkaſs, that muſt ſoon be turn'd into Rottenneſs and Duſt? And where is the Fault, but becauſe their whole Induſtry is confin'd to this World; and they give not themſelves leiſure to think of that to come much leſs to conſider ſeriouſly, how much Eternal Happineſs outweighs all the Satisfactions of the preſent Life? Hence all the Ideas of Eternity being weak, 'tis no wonder they make no ſtronger Impreſſions in them; and that as often as Earth interferes with Heaven, this ſo eaſily gives way. Here is our Miſery, O God, and in thee only is our Remedy; encreaſe therefore, we beſeech thee, our Faith, and ſo ſtrengthen in us the Impreſſions of the Eternal Goods, that for them we may contemn all that is Earthly, and cheerfully

ly embrace those Methods which thou hast declar'd most Effectual for coming to the Possession of them: Grant we may now offer all for Heaven, that we may esteem nothing of that hard, which thou hast appointed to be the Purchase of it, and that we may not lose the present Opportunity, wherein we are call'd to the Practice of what we believe.

Third Sunday *in* LENT.

GOSPEL,

Luke C. 11. V. 14. ends V. 28.

JESUS *was casting out a Devil, and it was Dumb.* - Tho' they are but few, who are wholly Tongue-tyed by the Devil; yet their number is greater, who by his Impressions are render'd Spiritually Dumb. Speech was given us by God for certain determinate Ends; and such as observe no Rule in their Words, nor direct them to those Ends, may be esteem'd Dumb Christians, however otherwise they abound in Words. *Væ tacentibus de te, quoniam loquaces muti sunt.* For all such Words are to be reputed no better than the Out-cries of Madmen, who publish their disorder'd Fancies, and speak whatever is suggested by their ungovern'd Passions.

To discover more in particular the

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number of those Christians, who are Spiritually Dumb, we must consider the Christian use of Words; the First is that of Blessing God, and offering to him a Sacrifice of Praise; this, perform'd to God's Honour, is more for our Advantage, than his; 'tis the Means for obtaining new Blessings; 'tis the Remedy of our Evils, and Comfort of our Afflictions; 'tis to satisfie the End of our Being: The Old World was made for the Praise of God's Power, and the New for the Praise of his Mercy: so that the Praise of God is the End of all things: This shall be the only Employment of the Blessed for all Eternity, and this Life being an Apprenticeship of the next, for which we are Born, this same ought to be a principal part of our Business here. Whatever Christian then is silent, as to those Praises, which are due from him to God, ought to be esteem'd Dumb, and as one Possess'd by a Dumb Devil, since such Silence can be the Effect of no other Impressions but such as are from the Devil.

And if under this Duty of Praising God, be comprehended the Obligation of Prayer, which is both a Confession and Praise of his Mercy and Power, and we here put into our Account, first those, who have no time observ'd for daily Prayer; and then those, who being punctual in their

their Hours, are yet careleſs in their Devotions, or, thro' the Vicious Diſorder of their Hearts, are very much indiſpos'd for what they pretend to perform; how will the number of Dumb Chriſtians be encreas'd, ſince all theſe are wanting in the due uſe of their Tongues?

A Third Duty, is that of Confeſſing our Sins both to God and his Miniſters; and to be ſilent in this, is a certain Argument of being poſſeſs'd by the Dumb Devil; for impenitence being join'd, from the beginning, with his Crime, he is hence become the King of all Impenitent Souls, nothing being more hateful to him, than a ſincere Confeſſion of Sins. And hence he is ever Induſtrious in raiſing a falſe Modeſty in Chriſtians, in making them aſham'd to Confeſs, what they were not aſham'd to Commit; in making them more averſe to the Remedy, than to the Diſeaſe; and perſwading them to conceal that, which cannot be hid. In this putting them upon the worſt of all Engagements, that is, upon hiding that for a ſhort time, which ſhall be made publick for all Eternity, and which would have been eternally hid, had it been here acknowledg'd, as was preſcrib'd them. Theſe are ſome, who are in the poſſeſſion of the Dumb Devil, being thus, by him, not only depriv'd of the Remiſſion of their

Sins, but likewiſe ſtrengthen'd in their ill Habits, and harden'd in Sin.

There are others again Spiritually Dumb; thoſe, I mean, who are then Silent, when Charity, Juſtice or Truth obliges them to ſpeak. Thoſe, who conſider, how many live in Ignorance of their moſt ſubſtantial Duties, and how many in the Practice of what is Scandalous or Unwarrantable, muſt hence ſuſpect their Silence, under whoſe Care they are, and begin to apprehend, that either Sloth, Indifferency, or the Fear of diſpleaſing, tyes up their Lips; and of what kind muſt that Tye be, when God and their Duty require them to ſpeak? Thoſe again, who conſider; how often the Innocent are oppreſs'd, the Abſent ſlander'd, the Virtuous ſuſpected or reproach'd, and how few Advocates they find to make their Defence, cannot but fear ſuch Silence; and that when Charity is over-aw'd by Intereſt, or other Human Reſpects, the Silence is from no other, but the Dumb Devil.

Thus a little Reflection is enough to inform us, that great Numbers of Chriſtians, are under the Impreſſions of this Evil Spirit: And if we make farther enquiry, it may be eaſily diſcover'd, that as the general Cauſe of People being Dumb, is becauſe they are Deaf, and therefore know not

not how to ſpeak, becauſe they do not hear; ſo it is with thoſe, who are Spiritually Dumb; the principal Occaſion of their not ſpeaking, is becauſe they are Deaf; they do not hear God, and are without a Senſe of thoſe Truths, which ſhould oblige them to ſpeak, and have the influence on their words; hence they abide Silent, when Duty calls for Defence.

Here's the general Misfortune of Mankind; they have their Ears and Hearts open to the Impreſſions of Self-love, Intereſt, Pleaſure and Ambition; and as Men always ſpeak the Language they are us'd to hear, and are ſilent as to all others; ſo the generality of Chriſtians being from their tender Years accuſtom'd to the Language of theſe corrupt Paſſions, they are ever ready to ſpeak in the Language they have heard; but ſeldom giving Attention to the Words of God, of Charity, Juſtice and Truth, this is like an unknown Tongue to them, and therefore they are Dumb, when they ſhould ſpeak in this Language.

Hence, it is, Chriſt, in the Concluſion of this Goſpel, pronounces thoſe Bleſſed, who hear the Word of God, and keep it; that is, who are ſo attentive to the Principles and Truths of the Goſpel, that theſe have the direction of their Lives, and over-rule all other Corrupt Maxims of the

World; for such Christians being accustomed to hear, are ever ready to speak the Language of Duty, and hence are freed from the Scandal of being possess'd with the Dumb Devil.

And may not then all Christians here easily apprehend, how much it is their Interest, to make a right use of the Time, in which we now are, by a serious Application of their Minds to the Study of God's Word, by hearing, reading and meditating whatever may be proper for possessing their Hearts with those Truths, that lead to Salvation? Men become Worldly, by conversing with the World, and they cannot be Christians in Fact, but by conversing with Gospel or Christian Truths. Their present Business then ought to be, effectually to convince themselves, That Eternal Happiness is the End of their Creation; that it is infinitely more valuable than all the Goods and Satisfactions of this Life; that it ought to be desir'd and sought by them, according to its Value, and the Interest they have in it; that they are Miserable amidst all the Enjoyments of Life, if they provide not for Eternity, by doing the Will of God, and keeping the Commandments; that there is a difficulty in this, and danger of Miscarriage, from the Inclinations of Corrupt Nature, from the Temptations of

of the Devil, from the Authority of Ill Example, and Snares of the World: that 'tis their Duty to ſtand with Reſolution againſt all theſe, in compliance with the Divine Will; that this being not to be effected, but by Self-denials, Labour, and the Aſſiſtance of God, they are to make this their daily Buſineſs, and be ever mindful, that the neglect of this puts all to the hazard.

If the Heart were truly poſſeſs'd with theſe Truths, Chriſtians would, by this way, not only underſtand the Language of the Goſpel, but likewiſe ſpeak it; God and their Salvation would have as much the influence of their words, as the World has upon Worldly Men. But how much Induſtry is neceſſary for this? O God, do thou inſpire thy Servants with an Induſtrious Zeal anſwerable to their Wants, and the Difficulty of what they have to learn; teach them to be more Sollicitous for Heaven, than for Earth; let the Principles of Salvation ſo rule in their Hearts, as to command a general Silence, as to whatever is hurtful to themſelves, or others, and make them skilful in no other Language, but that of the Goſpel, that ſo learning from thee to ſpeak, they may be Dumb only as to what the Devil ſuggeſts.

Fourth

Fourth Sunday *in* LENT.

GOSPEL,

John C. 6. V. 1. ends V. 15.

GAther the Fragments, that are left, that they be not loſt. The Subject of this Goſpel is a Miracle wrought by Chriſt, in Feeding a great Multitude with Five Loaves and Two Fiſhes: Upon which S. *Auguſtin* often remarks, that tho' this was a wonderful Effect of his Power, and a great Work, yet it is not greater, than what he ordinarily do's, for the Subſiſtance and Nouriſhment of Men. For that, whether God at once multiplies, in his own Hands, a few Loaves, and makes them capable of ſatisfying ſo great a Multitude, or by the Earth, in the ordinary way multiplies the Seed for their Food, the wonder he ſays, is the ſame, and the Effect of the ſame Power; and therefore, that Men judge not according to reaſon, in being ſurpriz'd at the one, and ſo little touch'd with the other; as if God acted in the one, and not in the other; whereas the Earth, and Seed, and all other Second Cauſes, are no otherwiſe fruitful, but by that Virtue and Diſpoſition, which are from him, and can have no Effect, but

but as his Power moves in them, and his Goodneſs gives a Bleſſing.

But the worſt is, by theſe miſtaken Judgments, they proportion their Gratitude; they have a Senſe of Miraculous ſuccours, but reflect not upon what comes the ordinary way. But Reaſon and Piety ought to correct theſe Miſtakes, and convince Chriſtians, that they have not leſs Obligations to God, for the Helps they receive by the ordinary Courſe of Second Cauſes, than if he wrought for them every Day a Miracle: and therefore that for theſe, they are not to be wanting in the ſincere Expreſſions of a daily Gratitude.

The Practice of this ought to be, Firſt, In giving Thanks with the Lips, in the actual uſe of every thing, by the Example of Chriſt, who firſt gave Thanks, before he diſtributed the Bread. Thoſe, who have every thing for calling for it, have reaſon to bleſs the Giver, and a grateful Senſe may be quicken'd in them, by conſidering, how many want, what they enjoy in plenty; and that 'tis not their Merit, but Providence only, that makes the diſtinction, Secondly, in employing what they have receiv'd from God, to anſwer the Neceſſities of themſelves or Family, by Chriſt's Example, who multiplying the Bread, to ſerve their Wants; who had then join'd themſelves

to him, has in this taught all others, what ought to be the pricipal uſe of whatever part they have in the Diſpenſations of his Ordinary Providence, and condemns their unnatural Injuſtice, who proſtitute the greateſt part of what they poſſeſs by the Divine Bounty, to their own Extravagance or Vice, and Rob their Family, of what is neceſſary for their Support, or for the due Education of their Children.

Thirdly, By gathering up the Fragments, that they be not loſt, but may ſerve for the help of the Poor. This ought to be practis'd by watchful Endeavours for preventing all Waſte; Firſt, in Servants, who being left without inſpection, are ſeldom ſo good Managers, as they ought to be, but either careleſly or prodigally throw away what might be ſpar'd for a better uſe. If this be done, in diſpoſing of what is not their own, they are to anſwer for the Injuſtice; and if an ill Cuſtom carries them on without Reflection, tho' the Fault may not be ſo great; yet thoſe, who are over them, are not excuſeable in either Caſe, ſince their Eye ought to prevent all ſuch ill Management; and their muſt be a ſinful Imprudence in ſuch a Blind Truſt, which gives, the Opportunity to injuſtice or Waſte.

Secondly, It is to be practis'd by all Chriſtians in regard of themſelves, and

of

of whatever they call, their own; that is, they are to manage with such good Husbandry, as having supplied, all Necessities, to gather up the Fragments for the Poor. Christ working a Miracle for their Relief, and ordering what was left, to be laid up, has taught Christians, how Industrious they are to be, in providing Succours for those, that want. There are few so streighten'd in Fortune, but by good Management, they might have Fragments to gather, for the help of others in Distress, if providing for Necessity only, they would barr all Expences of Pride and Intemperance. But if the Demands are to be satisfied of these Devouring Passions; if the Desire of appearing in a Dress above their Equals, or the Envy of others Vanity, or complying with Company, or indulging an Appetite, has the Command of their Purses, what wonder is it, if they have no Fragments to gather? They may perswade themselves, that they let none be lost; but if Christian Frugality were to make up their Accounts, how much would be sent down for waste, in the Expence of what might have been spar'd?

If this waste be found amongst the Poor, or those, at least, of the lower Rank, what is to be expected from others of a more plentiful Fortune? They will easily agree to this Maxim of the Gospel; That

That what is Superfluous to them, ought to be eſteem'd as Fragments for the Stock of the Poor: But it being not ſo eaſily agreed, what is Superfluous, theſe Fragments ſeldom appear. And who ſhall here make a peremptory Deciſion? 'Tis certain, if nothing is to be judg'd Superfluous, but what can be ſpar'd by Pride, Ambition, State, Appetite, Inclination and Idleneſs, there will be little ſet down under this Head; becauſe theſe being unreaſonable Paſſions, they are never ſatisfied by being fed, but ever grow, in proportion to the Favour that is ſhew'd them; what then can be Superfluous, when that is judge, which, being unſatiable, is ever in want, and ever deſiring more? If Cuſtom and reputed Decency are to be conſulted, we ſhall be ſtill at the ſame loſs; becauſe Pride, Gluttony and Extravagance, are ſo twiſted in, with all the Expences of Humane Life, that to be judg'd by Cuſtom and Decency, is to leave the Deciſion to Paſſion; theſe being nothing but Vice, under better Names. If the Lives of Chriſtians were regulated by the Spirit of the Goſpel, then Common Practice and Example would be warrantable Guides; but if theſe are taken up for Rules, with all the Corruption, that attends them, thoſe that follow, muſt neceſſarily be led out of the way.

What

What then is to be done amidſt ſo many Dangers of Miſtake? The Caſe admits of latitude, and there is no ſetting up Bounds, beyond which, all Expence is a Robbing of the Poor. The thing muſt therefore be left to Prudence, directed by Reaſon and Faith. Where this has the Command, a ſincere Eye will ſee ſo much of Prodigality and Pride in what is call'd Decency, as to cut off a great deal, without running into the other Extreme of a remarkable Singularity. It will examine the Table, Furniture, Attire, Divertiſements, and every where make Retrenchments, and not let a prevailing, but vicious Practice, ſo far gain upon the Goſpel, as to ſhelter all manner of Extravagance under the ſofter Name of Cuſtom. Here Humane Reſpects will put in *Caveats*; but what are the Cenſures of Men to a Spirit, that makes towards Heaven, and knows, that, to pleaſe the World is going out of the way? By this Method, many Fragments will ſoon be found, where others ſee nothing to be ſpar'd; and thus will a Treaſure be laid up in Heaven by the Hands of the Poor, when Chriſtians of the Mode are waſting this Stock, in courting thoſe Inclinations, which the Goſpel obliges them to renounce.

Chriſtians, we are now in a time when the Church calls you to make ſome Recompence

compence for paſt Diſorders, and God having ſufficiently manifeſted, how available Charity to the Poor is for this end, you here ſee, whence they may be ſupplied. Provide for Neceſſaries, and a Moderate Decency, but ſpare from Pride, ſpare from Appetite, Humour, Intemperance and State; give to the Poor, what theſe would devour: Feeding the Hungry, Cloathing the Naked, relieving Orphans, Widows and Priſoners, have the Promiſe of Bleſſings; but feeding your own Corruption, is Sacrificing God's Gifts to Self-love, to the World, and the Devil; which is never allowable, and much leſs now. But 'tis thou, O Jeſus, muſt teach Chriſtians to gather up Fragments: Preſs then thy Commands upon them, I beſeech thee, and let theſe prevail againſt the Torrent of Cuſtom and the World: Give them Grace to ſee all the Waſte they make, by the Flatteries of diſguis'd Corruption and Self-love, and let this be follow'd with a Horror of making themſelves Eternally Miſerable by that, which, if better employ'd, might be the Purchaſe of Heaven.

Paſſion-

Paſſion-Sunday.

GOSPEL,

John C. 8. V. 46. to the end.

WHich of you will accuſe me of Sin? Chriſt made this Challenge to the Jews, and his being exempt from Sin, is one of the principal Characters, which diſtinguiſhes him from all others, that are purely Men. It were to be wiſh'd, all Paſtors could ſay the ſame to their Flock; the Excellency of thoſe Myſteries, of which they are Miniſters, demands this Purity of them; and the Obligation they have of Inſtructing the Flock, is another preſſing argument upon them. The Life is a ſtronger Perſwaſive than Words; and little Fruit can be expected from that Preaching, where the Example of the Preacher gives the Lie to his Doctrine. If he ſhews, by his Practice, that the things of this World are to be lov'd, what will he prevail, in perſwading his Auditory to contemn them? Eſpecially too, when the Laity, and even thoſe, who are moſt Indulgent to themſelves, are ever ſubtilly Spiritual in Regard of their Paſtors, and let no Failing of theirs eſcape, without a Remark. This ought to make them watchful againſt the leaſt Diſorders, and oblige them to follow

follow St. *Paul*'s Advice, in not giving Occaſion of Scandal to any, that their Miniſtry may be under no Blemiſh. But however, the Flock too ought to remember, how much 'tis their Intereſt to renounce this Cenſorious Spirit, ſince by this they deprive themſelves of the Fruit of their Paſtor's Inſtructions, and thus in the end bear the Puniſhment of their own Cenſures. And may not they prevent all Surprize, if they ſee Paſtors living with Men for the Good of Men, by this Commerce, contracting ſome of their Spirit; and even Hope, that the continual Charity, which they practice in the Exerciſe of their Miniſtry, may be ſufficient to purifie the Filth they gather according to what the Apoſtle ſays, that Charity covers a Multitude of Sins? Nay, according to the Order of Providence, they may go farther, and by obſerving, that God has often permitted thoſe in Authority, to take very falſe Steps, as in *David*'s Caſe, in Puniſhment of the People's Sins, may not they, in their Paſtor's Faults, read their own Crimes; and inſtead of reproaching them, turn their Eyes upon themſelves, and labour to reform thoſe Evils, which has drawn this Judgment upon them.

This is ſome uſe, that may be made of Chriſt's Words, both by Paſtors and People

ple: But if we conſider them, in regard of Chriſt himſelf, we may ſee them verified in a moſt particular Manner, his whole Life being regulated by Reaſon, Charity and Obedience, with a Total Excluſion of all that was Sinful or Imperfect; ſo that the Love of Riches, Pleaſure or Honours, had no place in him; all that he did was with Reference to God's Glory, the Accompliſhment of his Sacred Will, and the Redemption of Man. Hence his whole time was divided betwixt Retirement and Labour, in Relieving the Diſtreſs'd, Reclaiming the Vicious, and Seeking the loſt Sheep; and having thus ſpent his Life, he finiſh'd it in the ſame Spirit, by giving his Blood a Sacrifice for Sin. And who then can accuſe him of Sin? No, bleſſed Jeſus, thy greateſt Enemies could never do this, with any Colour of Truth; and thoſe Crimes, with which they tax'd thee at thy Death, were the Suggeſtions, only of their Malice, who thirſted after thy Blood. All the Sins, that weigh'd upon thee, were not thine, but ours; and theſe ought not to be thy Accuſation, but our Reproach; and the greater now, that having had in thy Life an Example of Virtue, which we profeſs to follow, and ſeen in thy Death the Rigorous Puniſhment of Sin, we ſtill continue on obſtinate

obſtinate in Evil, as if we had neither Rule to direct, nor Juſtice to terrifie us.

Chriſt then was without Sin, and upon the Spot he gives ſufficient Proof of the Challenge here made, being unanſwerable, when expreſſing his Charity to the Jews, and their Chief Prieſts, in teaching them to believe, he meets no better Return, than of Reproach, Infamy and Malice, in their calling him *Samaritan*, taxing him for having a Devil, and taking up Stones, to throw at him. What greater Provocation could there poſſibly be than this, in having his Goodneſs thus ungratefully abus'd by their Malice? And if there had been any weakneſs in him, would it not here likely have appear'd? But what Effect had it upon him? He does Right to Truth, in meekly anſwering the Calumny, and ſaying, he had no Devil; and as for the Miſchief deſign'd againſt him, he only declines it, by peaceably going out of their way.

This Humble Patience is a great Argument of his Sanctity, and that he could not be reproach'd of Sin, and 'tis an Inſtance, which preſſes ſtrongly upon us at this time, when being call'd by the Church, to the Memory of his Paſſion, 'tis expected we ſhould Celebrate it, not in Ceremony; no, nor in Prayer only, and Thankſgiving

giving, but in his Spirit; that is, in the Spirit of Meekneſs, Patience and Humility. Theſe ought to be the Characters of his Followers, at all times, but more particularly now, when we are to live, as it were, in Preſence of Chriſt, under all his Sufferings, amidſt the Cruelty of the Jew's in *Pilate*'s Hall, and on Mount *Calvary*; and if Stubbornneſs, and a Proud Impatience, are ever unbecoming our Profeſſion, certainly now they have ſuch a Specifick Deformity, as to oblige us to an Abhorrence of all ſuch Diſorders.

Ought it not then to be the preſent Buſineſs of all Chriſtians, to conſider what are the ordinary Occaſions, that make them uneaſy, and provoke them to Paſſion or Impatience; and then ſo to arm themſelves againſt all, as to ſtand ſteddily under them, even according to the Copy of Chriſt, under the Rage of his Perſecutors? This ought to be their Poſture, in regard of all Evils of Human Life; but our preſent Goſpel enjoins it more particularly, with Reſpect to thoſe Provocations, which are given us by the Biting Tongues of others, mov'd either by Peeviſhneſs, Paſſion or Malice; and becauſe theſe frequently occur in the Commerce of Human Life, therefore we are to be more Solicitous in preparing againſt them.

I do not expect Chriſtians ſhould be inſenſible of ſuch Provocations, but that finding an Interior Reſentment, they ſhould gain that Command of themſelves, as not to break their own Peace, by Impatience, nor their Neighbours by engaging in a Quarrel. A meek Remonſtrance, in Behalf of Juſtice and Truth, is very warrantable; but when Perſons, thro' Paſſion or Malice, are indiſpos'd to hear, Silence is the moſt Adviſeable Method, or a peaceable Withdrawing, that ſo by giving way to the Storm it may not be improv'd by Reſiſtance, but have the Opportunity of ſpending it ſelf for want of freſh Matter, and by Degrees ſettle into a Calm.

Patience and Diſcretion are neceſſary for the Practice of this Expedient: But where is our Chriſtianity, if we do not come up to this? Are we Diſciples of our Maſter, if the Breath of our Neighbor is enough to overthrow us? Are we rooted in Charity, if upon ſuch ordinary Provocations we break all Peace? Where is our Meekneſs? Where our Humility? If we have no more of theſe but in Profeſſion and Words; and are only then Humble & Meek, when we have nothing to thwart us; what does this come to, but Mockery and Deceit? If we had a Maſter, that had only taught us by Words, and not practis'd what he taught, we might have

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ſome Colour to excuſe this Weakneſs; but having both this Doſtrine and Example under more Rigorous Trials than we are ever call'd to, we can do no leſs than condemn our ſelves of being Inſincere in what we profeſs, and acknowledge we are no more his Diſciples, than Pride and Impatience will give us leave.

For what is there, but a ſecret Pride at the Root of all Diſturbance and Paſſion, which ſwelling at every thing that can be interpreted Contempt or Diſreſpect, cauſes Diſquiet within, and Confuſion without? And is not this now a very commendable Quality, fitted for *Mount Calvery*, and ſuitable to our Suffering Lord? We honour, we ſay, his Humility, and 'tis with Pride; we honour his Silence, but with Contention; we honour his Patience, with Paſſion, his Meekneſs with Stubbornneſs, and his Charity with Contempt of our Neighbour, or Revenge. And are we thus to celebrate the Paſſion of our dying Lord, who was led like a Sheep to the Slaughter, without opening his Mouth? O God, deliver us from this Practical Soleciſm in Religion; give us a better Spirit, that we may in Earneſt follow the Example of our Head: And thou, O Jeſus, who art now our Advocate to the Father, plead in our Behalf; obtain for us ſuch a Portion of thy Patience, Humility, and

Meekneſs, that we may ſtand firm under all Trials, and not then forſake thee, when we are call'd to follow thee. Now, let us begin, and ſhew how much we honour thy Sufferings, by endeavouring to ſuffer like thee.

Palm-Sunday.

GOSPEL,

Mat. C. 21. V. 1. ends V. 9.

A *Great Multitude ſpread their Garments in the way; and others cut Boughs of Trees, and caſt them in the way.* The Palms diſtributed by the Church this Day, are in Memory of the Triumphant Entrance, Chriſt made into *Jeruſalem* ſome few days before his Paſſion, as is here deſcrib'd in this Goſpel. The Palms which this Multitude carried, were Emblems of that Victory, Chriſt was then to gain over Sin and Death, by dying on the Croſs a Sacrifice for Sin: The Palms we now take, are Yearly Remembrances of the ſame Victory of Chriſt, and therefore ought to be receiv'd with an Acknowledgment of that Mercy, and due Tribute of Thanks for what he ſuffer'd in our Behalf. The Palms in our Hands, are not only Signs of Joy for Chriſt's Triumphs, but Arguments of our being engag'd in the

the ſame Cauſe with him; that from this Day we declare War againſt Sin, and will not ceaſe to purſue it, till it be overcome. We undertake then to be Soldiers, and our Reſolution is of Fighting under Chriſt, our Leader, and our Head.

This is the Signification of the Palms on this Day; and if carrying them with us, we fix them up in ſome Remarkable Place, where they may be every Day in our Sight; they may ſerve the whole Year, to put us in Mind of the Cauſe, in which we are engag'd; they may give us Courage to Fight, in Aſſurance of the Devil being overcome by Chriſt, and that nothing is wanting for our Victory, but our Labour and Perſeverance; they may inſpire us with Reſolution, when, thro' the repeated Aſſaults of an untir'dEnemy, we begin to deſpond, and are tempted to give over the Cauſe, and be Deſerters; they may be a Reproach to our Treachery and Falſeneſs, when being reminded by them, how chargeable the Victory has been to Chriſt in the Effuſion of his Blood, we then reflect, how often we take part with his Enemy and ours; and having the Palms on our Walls, have nothing of them in our Hearts, but are then unworthily yielding, when we ſhould be Fighting with Conrage.

In this manner the Ceremony of this Day may be an Yearly Inſtruction to us, and we may come to underſtand the Language, the Palms ſpeak to us from the Walls. That we may be the better diſpos'd for this, a good Foundation ought to be laid this Day: Firſt, in conſidering, whether we are in earneſt deſirous of Victory; becauſe thoſe will never fight, like St. *Paul*, a good Fight, who do not deſire to overcome: The firſt Step therefore muſt be, to be diſpleas'd with our Subjection to Sin, to groan under that part of our Captivity, in which we yet are, to lament our great Diſtance from God, and ſigh for Liberty. Where theſe Diſpoſitions are Sincere, there will be Hopes of Victory; becauſe it muſt be the Senſe of a preſent Unhappineſs, that muſt put us upon ſeeking Relief; and as this Senſe is more lively, ſo will the Endeavours for Liberty be, in proportion, more Vigorous, in looking on all Sides, and conſidering of all Means, by which Help can poſſibly come. Thoſe Chriſtians, who come thus diſpos'd, have a right to the Palms, which are given this Day, becauſe they eſpouſe the ſame Cauſe with Chriſt; and tho' they are not yet Conquerors, are however in the way of being ſo, by having declar'd Sin their Enemy, and taking up Arms to Fight. But as for ſuch who

who are in Love with their Slavery, and think themſelves well amidſt their Chains, they can pretend to no part in this Days Solemnity, becauſe they are in Peace with Sin, and therefore cannot take Palms, as Followers of Chriſt, but with Confuſion to themſelves, in the Acknowledgment of his Power, to whom they know themſelves ſubject. Sad State of Chriſtians, who come to celebrate the Victories of Chriſt, in a contented Subjection to the Devil, and cannot ſay with Truth, that they deſire to be at Liberty.

Secondly, It is to be conſider'd by Chriſtians, whether the Propoſals they make this Day of aſſerting their Liberty, be Sincere Reſolutions of the Heart convinc'd of the Unhappineſs of Sin, or only ſome paſſing Motions upon the Spirit, ſenſible indeed of its Diſorders, and ſeeing Reaſons for a Change, but not coming in particular to reſolve upon undertaking the Means neceſſary for effecting it. The Inconſtancy of the Jewiſh People, who on this Day proclaim'd *Hoſanna's* to the Son of *David*, and were ſoon after prevail'd on by their Malicious Leaders, to change their *Hoſanna's* into *Crucifiges*, Solliciting for his Blood, whom they here own'd for their King, is Motive enough to preſs this Conſideration to Chriſtians, for the preventing this Treachery

in themſelves. The Corruption of an unſteddy Judgment is the ſame now, as it was then; 'tis eaſy approving the Way of Virtue and Truth; but purſuing it is not ſo eaſie, eſpecially, when the Power of Intereſt and Pleaſure, and a Perverſe World, come in with their Perſwaſives, and draw a contrary Way. The Strength of theſe appear not, while they are at a diſtance; and a Soul touch'd with a Senſe of Eternity, apprehends not the Difficulty of overcoming them; but when they come to make a nearer Aſſault, then is the Danger; and how often does it prove ſo great, that thoſe, who in the Church, and Hour of Retirement, take Palms, with a deſign to Fight, when they come into the Field, upon the firſt Attack, lay them down at the Enemies Feet, and then, too late, experience their own Raſhneſs, in judging themſelves fit for Battel, with thinking only, but without the Preparations ſuitable to the Enemies Strength, and their own Weakneſs? Is it not hence, that ſo many, after the Performance of the greateſt Duties, are ſoon after found amongſt the Jewiſh Crowd, in all their wonted Diſorders, and now Blaſpheming God with the ſame Lips, with which they had ſo lately bleſs'd him? This Inſtance of the Jews, and our own repeated Experience, is

is enough to oblige all at preſent to a ſtricter Examin of their Reſolutions, that ſo they may not deceive themſelves with the Ceremony of Purpoſes, and being careleſs of changing the Heart, be expos'd to their uſual Inconſtancy.

Thirdly, They are to conſider of ſome proper Means for gaining the Victory they propoſe: The Example of this People may give ſome Directions; who, in expreſſing their Zeal to Chriſt, omitted nothing they were then able to do; but cut down Branches of Trees, and ſpar'd not their very Garments to lay under his Feet. All this was no more than an Outward Ceremony; but it being the Effect of the inward Motions of their Souls, it was an Argument of their Sincerity and Zeal, and ſo far ought to be encourag'd in all that make Propoſals of Good. Reſolutions are very much to be ſuſpected, which are Nice, and ſubject to many Exceptions; for in theſe the Love of God appears not ſo much as Self-love, which afraid of Hurting it ſelf, is ever making Difficulties, and by this Partiality, puts a Reſtraint upon the Soul, as to the Ways of Penance, and permits little to be done in that manner, as it ought to be. Hence it is, that in many after the beſt Thoughts of Amendment, there appears ſcarce a Decency in Prayers, little Exactneſs in

Fasting, and as little Care in the Discipline of Life; but all is perform'd with that Indifferency, as if there were nothing Serious in them. Now, tho' it must be own'd, that true Repentance and Devotion are Actions of the Soul, wholly Interior, yet there is such a strict Connexion betwixt Soul and Body, that there can scarce be any Vigorous Action of Life within, but it will manifest it self by some External Symptoms. And hence, as I cannot but suspect there a prevailing Sloth or Coldness, where I see outward Actions perform'd with a sort of Lameness, or Want of Concern, as in kneeling on one Knee, Undecent Lolling, Holding a Book with one Hand, frequent Gazing about, &c. So a Constancy in better Postures speaks a more Vigorous Application of the Mind, and is an Argument of a stronger Life, influencing the whole Man.

I am sensible, how far Hypocrisie makes this Rule uncertain; but since I see God making Choice of an Army, for the Overthrow of *Madian*, from the Outward Posture of their Drinking at the River, and by this, distinguishing them from the rest, who were not chose for Fight, *Judge. c.* 7. this is Warrant enough for a general Dependance on it. Wherefore I could wish, that no Christians

Chriſtians would give Credit to their own Reſolutions, till they obſerve ſuch a Univerſal Induſtry in all the Duties of Religion and Penance, as may give them Hopes of a Sincere Converſion within, and ſo judge of the Heart by the Fruit. This will give them ſome Right to the Palms this Day, and prepare them for Victory. Grant, O Jeſus, this Spirit to all that meet this Day in Memory of thy Triumphs, that by Celebrating thy Victory over Sin, they may reſolutely engage in the ſame Cauſe, and never deſiſt, till their Souls are fitted for thoſe more laſting Palms, which thou haſt prepar'd for thoſe, who overcome.

Mandy-Thurſday.

GOSPEL,

John C. 13. V. 1. ends V. 15.

JEſus having lov'd his, that were in the World, he lov'd them to the end. This Love he expreſs'd in a moſt particular manner in this Day's Inſtitution; when, being now to depart out of the World, he left us his Body and Blood under the Forms of Bread and Wine; that ſo, being Aſcended to his Father, he might not leave us Orphans, but ſtill abide with us for the Food and Nouriſhment of our

Souls in their Spiritual Life, for the Support of our Baniſhment, the Comfort of our Pilgrimage, to be our Security in Dangers, our Strength in Temptations, our Phyſician in all Diſtempers, our Counſel in Difficulties, our Encouragement in Troubles, our Help in Infirmities. In fine, to be all to us that can be neceſſary, for carrying us thro' the Evils of this Life, to the Poſſeſſion of that Eternal Happineſs, which he has purchas'd with the Price of his Blood.

This was the pure Effect of his Mercy and Love to us; for if we look on our ſelves, what do we ſee there? Nothing but Ingratitude, Monſtrous Self-Love, Pride, Senſuality, Stubbornneſs and Sin. We ſee there all that can poſſibly provoke him to Anger: We ſee there enough to fear his Indignation, and to draw upon our heads all manner of Evils here, and a perpetual Excluſion from the Sight of God. But that he ſhould be Solicitous for our Salvation, that he ſhould employ his Infinite Wiſdom, and Almighty Power in effecting it, that he ſhould make his Incomprehenſible Majeſty ſtoop to that Humble Expedient of becoming our Food: This is the Work of his Mercy and Love to us; 'tis this Love we are call'd this Day to Acknowledge and Adore, and it muſt be a Reproach

proach to us of Inſenſibility, if we are wanting in this Duty.

This is performd in part, by preparing a decent Place for the Bleſſed Euchariſt, where it is attended with Lights and Flowers; and as far as theſe are the Acknowledgments of our Gratitude and Reſpect, ſo far they may be acceptable to him, whom we thus honour: But while the Mercy is to us, we muſt not leave the Tribute of Praiſe to theſe Inſenſible Creatures; we muſt pour forth our Hearts before our God in the Confeſſion of his Power and Goodneſs; we muſt join with the Choirs of Angels, in giving Glory and Adoration to him, that ſits on the Throne; we muſt return him our Love for his Love to us, and, upon the Senſe of our Weakneſs, beſeech him to compleat the Mercy of this Day, in teaching us Worthily to praiſe him, and Sincerely to Love him.

That there may be ſome Arguments of this, we muſt not be contented with the Sacrifice of our Lips, but reſolve upon the more Subſtantial way of giving him Honour, which is, of Imitating his Example. Let this then be the Buſineſs, of this Day, to conſider thoſe Leſſons, which Chriſt gives us in the Bleſſed Euchariſt, and then to undertake the Practice.

Firſt,

Firſt, We ſee Chriſt in this Myſtery, offering himſelf every Day a Sacrifice to the Glory of his Father: And is not this to teach us, that being now Sanctified by the Blood of the Lamb, our Lives ought to be a perpetual Sacrifice to God? We may begin this Sacrifice by the Oblation of our ſelves; and we have the Opportunity in practiſing it, in directing all we do, and all we ſuffer, to the Glory of God; in making all our Inclinations bend to the Divine Will, and letting no Authority of Cuſtom or Example draw us from our Duty. We may carry it on, by the Oblation of our Time to God, by confining it to the Obligations of our State, and the great Affair of Eternity. Why ſhould that be conſum'd in Idleneſs, Humour, and unprofitable Company, which is granted us for working out our Salvation? Have any a Stock of this in reſerve, that they are ſo Prodigal of the Preſent? See what a Reformation may be made, as to this Point; and let not that be any more thrown away upon Trifles, which may be ſo eaſily Sanctified, and be made a Sacrifice to God. This may be made a Sacrifice to God. This Sacrifice is to be compleated, by bringing under this Head all Worldly Goods, which being the Gift of God, ought to be employ'd with Reference to him, that ſo he may

may be Glorified in all his Creatures. This is done, in whatever is for the Support of our Being; which by the Order of Providence, is part of our Care: After this, how large a Field is open before us, in the Relief and Comfort of ſuch as want what God hath depoſited in our Hands, to be diſtributed, when he calls for it by the Cries of the Diſtreſs'd? How much of this has been miſpent, which might have been given to God in his Servants? And is not ſo much loſt? Think now of a better Method, ſuch as may be more anſwerable to the Goodneſs of our Lord, and more Serviceable to our Eternal Good.

Secondly, We ſee here the humble State of our Lord, confining both infinite Majeſty, Power and Glory, under the poor Elements of Bread. Is not this his Humility a Reproach to all our deſires of Ambition and Pride? Can we contemplate this Humility in him, and be at Peace with thoſe our Inclinations, which put us upon all manner of Contrivance, for Magnifying our ſelves, for appearing conſiderable in this World, and being thought better than we are? Is it this we learn in the School of Chriſt? or can we poſſibly ſit down contented with the falſe Perſwaſion of being his Diſciples, when we ſee even our moſt Deliberate and Studied Practice to be contrary, both to his

his Doctrine and Example? Our Inclinations to Pride may find ſome Plea, in being not ſubject to us; but to Favour, and ſo far Approve them, as to make it the Contrivance of our Thoughts, the Buſineſs of our Time, the Expence of our Money, to promote their Suggeſtions, where can this find Excuſe? It may be ſaid, the World expects it; but what an Argument is this to ſuch as have not the World, but Chriſt for their Maſter, who in Words and Life, teaches them, not to follow, but hate the World? Look well on Chriſt, and ſee, if there be not a Neceſſity of reforming; and this, upon ſuch Motives, as cannot be call'd Scruples, but by thoſe only who are willing to darken the Light of Heaven, that they may not ſee themſelves going out of the way, and be oblig'd to the ungrateful Trouble of denying themſelves, and their admir'd World.

Thirdly, We ſee Chriſt in a State of Patience, bearing with the Blaſphemies of Unbelievers, with the Sacriledges of Unworthy Receivers, and being Advocate, even for thoſe, who have offended him. This Example is a Check to our forward Impatience, Paſſion, and Uncharitable Animoſities, which are ever ready to break out, upon any Uneaſineſs or Provocation

cation. This is the Effect of our Pride, Self-Love, or nice Temper, which cannot bear any Contradiction, without Confuſion, and declaring War upon the Aggreſſor. And is this according to the Doctrine of our Maſter? The Marks of the old Man appear in this Diſorder; But there is nothing of the Spirit of Chriſt, which every where requires Patience and Submiſſion, obliges us to keep Peace, to forgive Injuries, and to overcome Evil with Good. If this be the Expreſs Will of God, and Command of the Goſpel, what can be ſaid of the contrary Practice, but that 'tis a departing from God and his Poſitive Law? And can the Profeſſors of the Goſpel tolerate this in themſelves, and be at Peace? This muſt not be, becauſe they can no otherwiſe hope to be united with God for all Eternity, than by living united with his Will here in this Life: And if Nature be averſe to this, this Averſion muſt be reſiſted and overcome. Here then is our Taſk, and in this we muſt labour all our Lives, to bring Nature into a due Subjection to the Will of God; if it cannot be done ſo eaſily, it muſt be effected with Labour; the Difficulty muſt not be a Hindrance to the Work. Patience muſt be obtain'd under all Troubles; Peace muſt be kept amidſt all Provocations; Charity

muſt

muſt be preſerv'd amidſt the greateſt Injures. Such is the Doctrine and Example of Chriſt; and ſince he allows no Diſpenſations, we cannot diſpence with our ſelves, but with the Tranſgreſſion of his Law, and forſaking him.

Chriſtians, here are ſome Principal Leſſons Chriſt teaches us in the Bleſſed Eucharift, and no Praiſes we can give him, will be acceptable, nor any Adoration be Sincere if our Hearts be not prepar'd to receive theſe Impreſſions, and firmly reſolv'd to live in the Practice of them. If you believe Chriſt to be the Food of your Souls, it is thus you muſt be fed by him; and on theſe Terms only can he abide in you, and you in him. Help us, O Jeſus, in this Difficult Task; teach us the Love of God, and of our Neighbour; teach us to be truly Patient, Meek, and Humble; give us thy Spirit that we may follow thy Example, and let the Power of thy Unſpeakable Love ever prevail in us, againſt all the Power of Corruption, Self-Love, and Sin.

EASTER-DAY.

GOSPEL,

Mark. C. 16. V. 1. ends. V. 7.

HE *is riſen he is not here.* The Reſurrection of Chriſt is the Accompliſhment of Man's Redemption. He Died for our Sins; he Roſe again, that we might be Cloath'd with a new Juſtice, ſuch as may eſtabliſh us in a Life of Virtue, and preſerve us from the Danger of our own Corruption. This Myſtery is the Confirmation of our Faith; that we ſhall one Day riſe from the Dead to a Life Immortal; a Life, to which Sin and Death can have no Acceſs: The Yearly Celebration of it, is to revive this Faith in us, and to put us in Mind of obtaining ſuch an Eſtabliſhment in Virtue againſt all Sinful Relapſes, as may be a Preparation for that Unchangeable State hereafter. For this end the Church calls upon us, to Ariſe with Chriſt; and that, as Chriſt Dying once, Died no more; for that Death had now no Power over him, ſo we ought to Riſe from Sin, and Sin no more; that we ought to Renounce all Impiety, and Worldly Deſires, and live Soberly, Piouſly, Juſtly, in Expectation of the Coming of our Lord; that we ought to

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seek the Things that are Above, and not the Things on Earth; and that thus only we can duly Celebrate this Festival, and hope to Rise with Christ in the Resurrection of the Just.

The Solemnity is great, and our Obligation, you see, is likewise great; not to be Satisfied, by Abstaining only from Servile Works; for so far the Beasts may go, nor by Dissolute Joy, or Plentiful Tables, for thus the Heathens honour their Gods; But by putting on the new Man, and living as the Children of Light, Sanctified by the Blood of Christ. Christ was Crucified, that the Body of Sin might be destroy'd, and we no longer be the Servants of Sin. This was the End of Christ's Sufferings, and it ought to be our great Concern, that this Effect be found in us: For to go on now in Sin, if it be not a Reproach to Christ's Passion, 'tis an Argument, at least, of our having no part in it. And what State can there be more Miserable, than for a Christian to be found still a Captive to Sin, after Christ has given his Blood for his Ransom from Sin?

As the Angel therefore said to the Women, this Day, looking for Christ among the Dead; *Surrexit, non est hic: He is Risen, he is not here:* So the State of every Christian ought to be such on this Day, that

that as to all Wilful and Affected Sin, it may with Truth be said of him; *Surrexit, He is risen, he is not here,* The past Time ought to suffice for Sin, and now, as to what remains, all ought to live to the Will of God: This it is, St. *Paul* says to the *Corinthians*; You have been Sinners, but now you are wash'd; now you are Sanctified, now you are Justified in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ: You have been Darkness, but now you are Light in our Lord; walk therefore as the Children of Light. This is the Fruit of Christ's Passion, which ought to be found in every Christian; this it is, which the Present Solemnity of the Resurrection demands of every one in particular; and where-ever this is not, such are not the Children of God, nor have any part in Christ; and the Resurrection of our Lord, which is a Day of Joy to Repenting Sinners, what must it be to such as Obstinately or Carelessly abide in Sin, but a Day of Reproach and Confusion, even a Beginning of that Confusion, which, if not timely prevented, will be Eternal; for where the Mercies of a Redeemer do not raise from the Grave of Sin, what can be expected, but to lye Buried in Sin for ever?

Wherefore, it being a common Interest to escape this Confusion, 'tis plain, it can be

be no other way effected, than by Rising with Christ from Sin, and beginning the Life of the New Man: And because the Weight of our Corruption is a general Hind'rance to this Work, and the Occasion of it being left unfinish'd, tho' often begun, therefore 'tis our present Duty to consider of Means proper for carrying it on. Our present Gospel furnishes us with some in the Example of the Holy Women, who went this Day to visit the Sepulcher of our Lord.

The First is that of their Sincerity: They make a Provision of Perfumes, they Rise early in the Morning to carry them to the Sepulcher; they think not of the Inconvenience of going alone; and having none in their Company capable of rowling away the Stone; this Difficulty occurs to them upon the way, but they are not discourag'd, but pursue their Journey with a Hope in Providence. Thus they go on, following the Impetuous Motions of a Sincere Heart, without Regard to any of those Precautions, which Humane and Wary Prudence might have Suggested; and what is the Success? They find the Stone remov'd from the Mouth of the Sepulcher, and are assur'd of Christ being Risen from the Dead, by two Angels that appear'd to them, and are order'd to give Notice of it to the Apostles. Thus have

have they the firſt News of the Reſurrection, and, by Commiſſion from Heaven, are made the Apoſtles of it to the Apoſtles.

Now, if we conſider the Diſpoſition of their Minds, 'tis plain, they had not a lively Faith of Chriſt's Reſurrection, nor in thoſe Words, by which he foretold it, becauſe they thought him Dead; but it being the Trouble at Chriſt's Death, which ſeizing their Spirit, made them Incapable of Reflecting, or Thinking of any thing elſe: And they, at the ſame time, following the Dictates of a Sincere Love, in reſolving to expreſs the Honour they had for him, ſuppos'd Dead, in the beſt manner they could; Chriſt diſtinguiſhes betwixt the Effects of Humane Weakneſs in them, and the Sincerity of their Love, in bearing with the one, and Recompencing the other.

A like good Effect will thoſe Chriſtians find, who with a like Sincerity, ſeek their Lord. If they are ſenſible of their Wants, and upon true Deſires of Amendment, ſtrongly apply themſelves to undertake whatever appears to them, as grateful to their God; ſuch a Diſpoſition cannot fail of meeting with Bleſſings from his Hand, who cannot ſtand againſt the Endeavours of a Fervent and Single Heart, but will ſhew them Mercy, in bearing

bearing with their Infirmities, in removing their Difficulties, in perfecting their Faith, and giving Light to their Darkneſs; *Exortum eſt in Tenebris lumen rectis Corde.* And tho' there appears ſomething in theſe, which may not ſuit with the Maxims of Human Prudence, and may therefore draw upon them the Reproach of Indiſcretion; yet I think their Folly is more to be valued, than the Prudence of others, who by their great Cautionſneſs, and Irreſolute Deliberations, loſe many Opportunities of doing Good; and by the Foreſight of Difficulties, are diſcourag'd from undertaking what others go thro', carried on by the Force of Sincerity and Hope. This Expedient of Sincerity, is ſo abſolutely neceſſary in all the Affairs of a Chriſtian Life, that the Care of Parents cannot be better employ'd than in working their Children, from their Tender Years into this Holy Diſpoſition, by a Steddy and Severe Diſcouragement of all, that ſeems to incline to Flattery, Inconſtancy and Lying. And thoſe of Riper Age cannot better ſecure their Eternity, than by not Tollerating, but Puniſhing, theſe Evils in themſelves.

This has a neceſſary Connexion with another Help, recommended in this Goſpel, which is that of Diligence and Induſtry in all the Buſineſs of the Soul, and

and is ſignified by the early Riſing of theſe Pious Women, that went to the Sepulcher. There are very few, who have any Degree of Seriouſneſs in what belongs to Eternity, but they ſee their Wants, they have a Senſe of their Failings, they deſire to Amend, and make Frequent Purpoſes, in order to it. And the great Occaſion of Miſcarriage is from a kind of Sloth, which hangs like a weight at their Hands, and hinders them in the Execution of their Deſigns, by which their whole Life comes to be a Succeſſion of Purpoſes, but not with Fruit anſwerable to them. Now, by what Means can this be remedied, but by greater Induſtry, ſuch as may bear ſome Proportion with an Eternal Concern? Salvation is not to be expected without Labour; and 'tis no wonder, if they advance not in the way who ſcarce take Pains enough, to believe themſelves in Earneſt, in what they propoſe; but perform all Duties with ſuch Lazineſs of Mind, admit ſo many Excuſes and Delays, that one Reflection upon themſelves, is enough to Confound them with their own Indifferency, and their Undervalving Heaven, in bidding ſo little for it. This is not the way of the Goſpel, and cannot be the Way to Heaven, Some better Method therefore muſt be taken, a Method of greater

greater Resolution, of more Life and Vigour: For this is little better than Lying still, and therefore cannot be the Means for Rising to a new Life. Inspire all thy Faithful, I beseech thee, O Jesus, with a Sense of their Obligation; let the Difficulties of their Task awaken them, let their Danger quicken them, and thy laborious Example spur them on. And since this was the day of thy beginning a new Life, give a new Life to all that belive in thee, that they may no longer Sleep in Death, but begin such a Method, as may be a Security against Sin, and give them a well-grounded Hopes of Rising with thee to a Life Immortal.

Easter-

Eaſter-Monday.

GOSPEL.

Luk. C. 24. V. 13. ends V. 35.

THEY *diſdours'd together of the things that had happen'd.* The Subject of this Goſpel is a Relation of Chriſt's appearing, after his Reſurrection to two Diſciples going to *Emmaus.* Theſe had not as yet a Faith of Chriſt being Riſen: We hop'd, ſay they, that he would have deliver'd *Iſrael*; but now they ſeem'd to fear a Diſappointment. But however, ſuch was their Love for their Maſter, that they could ſpeak of nothing but of him; this is the Subject of their Diſcourſe on the way; and while thus entertain'd, Chriſt joins himſelf to their Company, tho' as yet unknown, and ſoon after opens their Eyes to ſee the Unreaſonableneſs of their own Fears, and know him.

It is out of the Abundance of the Heart, the Mouth ſpeaks. Hearts poſſeſs'd with God, ſpeak of God; and where there is a Sollicitude for Truth and Salvation, this cannot be ſmother'd, but it

will discover it self, either for the help of others, or in hopes of being improv'd by some new Light. *Mary Magdalen* seeks her Lord, and not finding him at the Sepulcher, her uneasy Mind speaks its Wants, and makes enquiry of those she meets. These two Disciples have their Desires on their Lord, and they communicate their Concern to a Stranger, that presents himself on the way. And who is this Stranger, but Christ himself, who knowing their Sollicitude, answers the earnestness of their Desires, in offering himself both to *Magdalen* and these Apostles, and in being his own Discoverer? So that they do not only find him by seeking, but even then have him, while they are looking for him.

This is not an Encouragement to discover all Resentments or Uneasiness of Mind, to every one, that is thrown upon us by Accident; for this cannot be, without great Indiscretion; but only to raise in Christians a just Sollicitude of all, that belongs to Eternity, and to manifest this Concern, in conferring with such Persons, whose Charity fits them for being Instruments of good. This is necessary for all those, who can possibly suppose themselves under any Mistakes, as to the Doctrine of the Gospel; for Truth being necessary for bringing Christians to the possession

session of the Eternal Truth; the Fear of being deceiv'd in what he requires of them to be believ'd, ought to make them Sollicitous in preventing Mistakes; this Sollicitude ought to put them upon conferring with such as Providence offers, and are capable of giving any Light. And tho' the Fear of being disturb'd, and even perplex'd by such Enquiry may be some Discouragement to this Advice; yet since there are many Errors in the World, and the Apprehension of perplexity is alike in all, that are Serious, this Fear ought not to have the direction in giving a Check to all Enquiry; because then all would be bound up to the Errors of their Education, and none could be in a way of being deliver'd from the Misfortune of their first Darkness. Whatever therefore this Fear be, it ought to be over-rul'd by the Gospel Command of *Seeking* and *Trying all things*; and the Infinite Goodness of God is to ground in them a Confidence, that he, who has made Truth so much their Interest, and commanded them to seek it, will be a Guard of their Sincerity, and secure them against such Miscarriages, as are the Punishment of Pride and Rashness. In a search undertaken upon these Motives, the Blessing of Heaven may be expected, since he has given the Encouragement, who has been so often found

by those, that sought him; and has let it be no loss to them, who even then sought him, while they had him. But as for those, who are afraid of Enquiring, let them consider, whether it be not an Indifferency to Truth, or Worldly Considerations, keeps them back; and whether, under the pretext of preserving an interior Peace, they may not be partial to Interest, and justly be punish'd by strengthning themselves in Error, while they pretend a fear of being Injurious to Truth.

This same Method of Conferring, is necessary for some particular States; those, I mean, which have difficulty in their discharge. This Necessity is grounded on the general streightness of Human Spirit, which meeting with the Infirmities of Constitution, as in Want of Vigour, Weakness of Memory, Excess of some Passion, Niceness, Sloth, or Self-love, or in want of Reflection, is the Occasion of many considerable Branches of Duty being neglected, and sometimes no more thought of, than if they were no part of their Concern. Add to these the general Partiality, to which we are Subject in our own Affairs; and that having a full View of others, we see our selves but by halves, and from these heads there will appear a Necessity, for all in difficult States, to confer with others, that by such Discourse

courſe, they may receive the Benefit of others Reflections, and by a Communication of Thoughts, encreaſe that Light, which may help them in the Diſcovery of their Overſights, and ſhew them the way to amend. If Chriſtians had a juſt diſtruſt of themſelves, and a Zeal for Duty, they would encourage ſuch Interviews, which might be ſo many ways beneficial to them, and let theſe take place of thoſe unprofitable, if not ſottiſh Meetings, where amidſt Drink and Smoke, they gratifie their Idle and too often Vicious Humour, improve Curioſity, diſſipate their Minds, and learn to be Skilful Governours of the World, but not of themſelves.

Upon the ſame Conſideration, this Method becomes neceſſary for all States; for tho' there be not a like difficulty in all, yet there are Difficulties ſtill, and ſuch, as cannot be better remov'd, than by this way. For what Condition of Life is there, which has not the Burthen of many Obligations upon it, both as to Spirituals and Temporals? And are not all theſe ſubject to great Overſights, Neglects and Injuſtices, ſuch as are Injurious to God, our Neighbour, or our Selves? And is not ſuch the Infirmity of our Nature, as to go on very often blinded by Paſſion, Sloth, or Intereſt in ſuch Ways, as are either Dangerous, Scandalous, or

Unwarrantable, obvious enough to others Eyes, so as to raise wonder in the Observers; and yet, either not at all discern'd by our selves, or, at least, so little regarded, as not to be thought worth our Care? Who is there, tho' Pious and Learned, exempt from this Partiality and Blindness? And what more effectual for preventing or remedying this Evil, than by frequent Conferring with others, upon the Subject of our State? Such Discourses will awaken and enlighten, they will raise Doubts, suggest Matter for Consulting, discover the subtle workings of Self love, Interest and Passion, oblige us to make many Reflections, and shew our selves to our selves, by taking off all Disguises. Is not this Motive enough to recommend the Practice of these Two Disciples, in Discoursing together, since it may be so much to our Advantage both of Soul and Body? This is the Method all follow in Matters of Concern and Difficulty, where the Success is not indifferent to them. Thus all approve it, and why is not the Practice more extended? A general Reason is, because few are Sollicitous to do well; but there is another prevails with some; they are either sensible of their doing what cannot be justified, or see enough, at least, to suspect themselves; and therefore are afraid of admitting Discourses,

courſes, leſt they ſhould be reprov'd, or have their Scruples encreas'd in a Matter, which their Intereſt or Paſſion cannot allow to be touch'd, And this, I fear, is the Caſe of too many, who in the Choice of Directors and Friends, always except againſt ſuch, as they apprehend will make them uneaſie, in freely Cenſuring what they ſee deſerves it, or in putting them upon denying themſelves, what they are not yet willing to part with. This is a reſtraint upon the Communication, we ſpeak of, and opens a way to another, which is as infectious as the Plague. But, how ſhould it be otherwiſe? The ſame Hand that ſhuts out God, lets in the Devil. They who will not make uſe of thoſe Means, which are proper for receiving Light and Viſits from Heaven, muſt periſh at laſt in the Darkneſs, which they love. 'Tis thou only, O God, canſt preſerve us from this Misfortune, by teaching us to be wiſe to Salvation. Grant to all this Wiſdom, that no Fondneſs of Error, Vice, or the World, may be a barr to thoſe Helps, which thou haſt recommended for their Eternal Good.

Easter-Tuesday.

GOSPEL,

Luke C. 24. V. 36. ends V 47.

THey being troubl'd and affrighted, imagin'd they saw a Spirit. This was the first Effect of Christ manifesting himself to his Apostles after his arising from the Dead. He presented himself in the midst of them, and such was their difficulty of believing, that they could not perswade themselves, that it was any more than an Apparition. This their Incredulity was necessary for establishing the Faith of this Mystery; since not being Credulous, there was a necessity of most convincing Proofs for perswading them to believe it. This therefore was so order'd by Providence, in all the Witnesses of this Truth. The Women, that carried Perfumes to his Sepulcher, went with a Perswasion of his being dead: The two Disciples going to *Emmaus*, seem'd disappointed in the hopes they once had of his Resurrection: The Apostles, tho' prepar'd by the Information they had receiv'd, were not hasty in believing it: *Thomas* positively declar'd his dissent, and that he would not believe it, but upon Evidence of seeing. Now tho' this was a Weakness in all, yet it was permitted

permitted for our greater Aſſurance. For had they ſhew'd an Over-Credulity or Fondneſs in believing, their Teſtimony might have been queſtion'd, in a Myſtery ſo difficult to Human Spirit. But now being unprepar'd for believing, and yet ſo fully convinc'd of it, as to give their Lives in Teſtimony of the Truth, this renders them Witneſſes above all Exception. Then, if we add to this the Power, which Chriſt, after his Reſurrection, gave to his Apoſtles, of Working Miracles, and Curing Diſeaſes; and that they were Witneſſes of theſe Effects wrought in the Name of Jeſus Riſen from the Dead, we may ſay, the Lives of the Apoſtles, and of the Firſt Chriſtians; were an Authentick Confirmation of the Reſurrection.

We are therefore to give infinite Thanks to our Redeemer, for ſetting this Fundamental Article of our Religion in ſuch an Eminent degree of Certainty, as equals and ſurpaſſes that of all other things in the World. For the Reſurrection of Chriſt being prov'd all other Articles are invincibly prov'd in it. For if Jeſus Chriſt be Riſen, then the whole Goſpel is to be believ'd; then the Church is to be believ'd, which is promis'd in the Goſpel, the Old Teſtament is to be believ'd, becauſe it is Authoriz'd by it; in fine, the whole Chriſtian Religion is to

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be believ'd, because 'tis all link'd to the truth of the Resurrection.

Now, while we see the Incredulity of the Apostles, and of the rest, thus remov'd, so that, what at first they imagin'd no more than a Dream, they afterwards believ'd with that firmness, as to make their Lives and Death the unquestionable Proof of their Faith, have not we here some reason to reproach our selves of Unbelief, whilst after so great Evidence, and amidst the profession of Believing, we do not imitate the Faith of the Apostles, but carrying on the first Impressions of the Apostles throughout our whole Lives, seem to imagine all the Mysteries of our Faith, to be no more than frightful Apparition or Dreams?

This must be the Conclusion, if regard be had to the common practice of those, who are call'd Believers. For whilst all profess a belief of an Eternal Life to come; that this is of that infinite Concern, that all the Goods and Enjoyments of this World are nothing, if compar'd to it; that therefore they are to be made Serviceable to the purchase of Eternity; and that nothing less, than Everlasting Misery is to be the Consequence of any other Management; whilst, I say, they thus profess to believe, and yet in the usual Method of their Lives, there appears little or no Influence

of

of this Faith, but all is carried on by the force of other Principles, may not it without Rashness, be said, that in reality they believe not, but take all for Imagination and Dream?

What other can be the Consequence, when we see Christians so careless and indifferent as to the Concerns of Eternity, as to lay them by upon meer Sloth only, and upon Compliance; to give every Humour the Preference, to trample upon the Commandments, for running after Trifles and Smoke, to Court the World and its Applause, at any Expence, to prostitute all they possess to Inclination and Mode; to forsake the Maxims and Spirit of the Gospel, which lead to God, and follow quite other Principles, such as Pride and Corruption have set up? Can it be thought of these, they truly believe what they profess? If they believ'd Heaven so much their Interest, would they forfeit it so easily? Would the Provision for a few and uncertain Years, have the preference to a certain Eternity, and the Care of a Carcass take place of an Immortal Soul? Did I see the Husbandman more Sollicitous to preserve the Chaff than the Corn; the Refiner laying up the Dross, and careless of the more Valuable Metals; and all others making Chests for hoarding up of Pebbles, and exposing their Jewels and Money to

be

be a Prey to every Hand, then some Credit might be given to this Proceeding: But while the General Method of all in their Senses, is to make that the subject of their greatest Care, which they believe their greatest Intereſt, muſt it not be concluded, that either their Belief of Heaven, is not what they profeſs; or elſe, that they are not in their Wits, in letting the moſt Contemptible Things of Life have the greater part of their Concern?

Again, if they in earneſt believ'd the Torments of Hell to be endleſs and intolerable, and that there is no poſſibility of Relief for thoſe, who are condemn'd to them; but that they muſt be their Everlaſting Portion; would not they be daily watchful in doing their beſt, for their Security againſt this Danger? 'Tis plain, how Nice they are, and fearful of every thing that hurts; and their Averſion is ſuch to Pain and Trouble here, that they ſpare no Care and Charge for remedying the leaſt uneaſineſs. Now would not the like induſtrious Care be extended for the avoiding Hell, if their belief of it were real? Where they believe Dangers before them, they are ever at a ſtand; nothing can invite them into the Fire, to Precipices, or into the Mouths of wild Beaſts, and while they run headlong into Hell, is it not, becauſe they take that Fire to be no more than Imaginary?

Thus

Thus if we meaſure the Faith of Chriſtians by the general Practice, we cannot find it to be Real, either as to Heaven or Hell, but that all looks like Phantoms, and in this Perſwaſion they ſeem to live. And in this Senſe, I fear it will prove true, that when the Son of Man comes, he will ſcarce find Faith upon Earth, but only the Profeſſion of it.

Have we not than all reaſon to beg of Chriſt our Lord, that, as at this time, he confirm'd the Apoſtles in their Faith, and gave them Senſe to underſtand the Scriptures, ſo he will now pleaſe to encreaſe our Faith, and give us a Senſe of what we hear, read, and believe; that our Faith may be as fruitful Seed in our Hearts, manifeſting it ſelf in Good Works, and thus diſtinguiſh us from Unbelievers. Grant us this Grace, O Jeſus, and ſince thou haſt been ſo Merciful, to provide us with ſuch Evidence, as to raiſe our Faith above all queſtion, let this Faith have this powerful influence upon us, that we may not bring this Scandal upon it, as to be reputed a Dream; but that we may in all things live according to what we believe, and give proof of our Faith by our Works, by referring all to thee, and providing for that happy State, for which we were Created.

Low-Sunday.

GOSPEL,

John C. 20. V. 19. to the end.

JESUS *came and ſtood in the midſt, and ſaid to them; Peace be to you: and having ſaid this, ſhew'd them his Hands and Side.* Chriſt manifeſting himſelf to his Apoſtles, ever gives them his Peace, and at this time in particular informs them, on what this Peace ought to be grounded, by ſhewing them his Hands and his Side, and letting them ſee the Marks of the Wounds he had receiv'd for them. Happy Apoſtles, who here have the Bleſſing of a Peace, ſuch as the World cannot give, and are taught to build it on a Sure Foundation, ſuch as poſſibly cannot fail. Happy Chriſtians, who on this Day can enter into the participation of this Bleſſing, and in the Wounds of their Redeemer find Peace amidſt all the Tumults of the World, the War of the Fleſh, and the Aſſults of a Malicious Enemy. Grant us, O Jeſus, this Peace in Thee. And now let us ſee, what Peace he gives.

In the Wounds of Jeſus is to be found Peace amidſt the Enquiries of a working Imagination, and the diſtruſtful Suggeſtions of an Incredulous Temper. For the Wounds

Wounds of Chriſt command Peace to all theſe, in giving Proof of his being God. Such a Proof they were to S. *Thomas*, in one of the Inſtances in this Goſpel, when having put his Fingers into his Sacred Wounds, he publiſh'd this Confeſſion of Chriſt's Divinity; *Dominus meus & Deus meus*; *My Lord and my God.* In this, acknowledging not only the Truth of his Reſurrection, but likewiſe of all that he had advanc'd of himſelf, and conſequently, that this was the Idea Chriſt had imprinted in his Apoſtles of himſelf, both by his Words and Miracles; and the Anſwer of Chriſt is an Authentic Confirmation of the Truth of this Confeſſion; *Thou haſt believ'd*, Thomas, *becauſe thou haſt ſeen me: Bleſſed are they, who have not ſeen, and yet have believ'd.*

If Chriſt then be acknowledg'd to be God, the Eſtabliſhment of the Church is of God, the Promiſes made to it, for teaching Truth to the end of the World, are of God; the Command, of believing it, is of God. And what then is the Faith of Chriſtians, in aſſenting to the Doctrines of the Church, but a Faith built on God, a Faith which has God's Infinite Truth for its Support, and his Indiſputable Authority, which ſets it above all Exception? And is not this enough to give Peace and Security to a Chriſtian Soul?

Cannot

Cannot he here walk on with ſafety; ſince whatever the Darkneſs be, he has nothing leſs than God to Command him to go on, and his Solemn Word engag'd for his going right? Cannot he here reſt with Security in ſuch a Guide? And what then are all Doubts, Fears, and Objections made againſt the Doctrines thus deliver'd to him? They are no more than the workings of an unſettled Imagination, or the Reaſoning of Men in Matters above all Human Reaſon; and what is Imagination, or weak Reaſon, in Compariſon of God! What Security can they give like to his? Or can it be ſuitable even to Common Reaſon, to queſtion the Appointments of God, to doubt of his Direction, to diſobey his poſitive Command, upon Difficulties mov'd by theſe? Is not this to prefer Uncertainty to Infinite Truth, and Man to God? Thus then the Chriſtian, from Chriſt's Sacred Wounds, confeſſing with S. *Thomas*, Chriſt to be God, partakes of that Peace given to the Apoſtles, and reſts in a Calm of an unerring Faith, amidſt all Attempts, that can poſſibly be made againſt it.

As theſe give Peace to his Faith, ſo they do likewiſe to his Hope, which being equally Divine Virtues, are equally built on God; Faith on his Infinite Truth, and Hope on his Incomprehenſible Goodneſs. And as this Truth quiets all Doubts, which lead

lead to Infidelity; ſo this Goodneſs moderates all Fears, which lead to Deſpair. However therefore the Knowledge of his own Ingratitude, and the Memory of his Numberleſs Sins, give him frequent diſturbance, and ſet him at ſuch a diſtance from Heaven, that he ſees no place in himſelf, but for Diſpair; yet when he looks on the Wounds of his Redeemer, and in them, ſees what a Price has been paid for Sin, what an Advocate he has to the Father, and from them takes the meaſure of God's Mercy, here he begins to raiſe up his Mind, and finds ſo much grounds for Hope, that there is no more place left for Deſpair. This is to be the Refuge of all Repenting Sinners, as often as the Horror of paſt Sins ſpreads a Darkneſs on their Spirits, and with a heavy Night oppreſſes their Thoughts: Then it is they are to ſeek Comfort in the Paſſion of Chriſt; and putting this in the Ballance againſt their Crimes, ſee if its Infinite Value be not enough to Cancel all their Debt. Teach me, O Jeſus, here to take ſhelter againſt Deſpair, that no apprehenſion of Guilt may diminiſh in my Soul, the Hope I ought to have in thee.

The ſame affords Peace under all the diſtracting Troubles of this Life; for tho' Suffering cauſes great uneaſineſs, and Afflictions generally bring ſuch diſorder with them,

them, as to threathen the Soul with Confusion; yet, when in the Wounds of Christ, is manifested, how much Suffering is honour'd in his Sacred Person, how available it is for the Remission of Sin, how it unites true Believers with their Head, how Glorious is the Reward of those that suffer with Patience: Here Comfort begins to flow in upon the Soul, and Peace accompanies the greatest Storm. In this manner all in trouble are to endeavour to raise up their Souls from under the weight, that oppresses, by the Instruction of Christ's Wounds, which teach a Submission to the Orders of God, and require an Approbation of whatever his Justice appoints, with a confidence, that all is design'd for their Eternal Good. And this will certainly be the Effect, if uniting their Sufferings with Christ's, they endeavour to Suffer in his Spirit; that is, with an entire Subjection to the Divine Will, and ever labouring to suppress the Resentments of their Rebellious Nature, by acknowledging his Justice and making all that is within them bend to his Appointment.

The same again establish Peace with our Neighbour: For we no sooner behold the Wounds Christ receiv'd, but we are put in mind, that all he suffer'd was for Sinners, for those who were his Enemies; we are put in mind of the manner in which he suffer'd

ſuffer'd, that is, in an humble Silence, without opening his Mouth: And is not this an Inſtruction to us, of how Univerſal an extent our Charity ought to be? That it is not to be check'd by the diſlikes we ſuppoſe, or find in our Neighbour, nor by any ill Offices they do us; but that, by Chriſt's Example, we are to preſerve our Charity ſtill inviolable, tho' we can ſhew the Wounds we have receiv'd from others Malice. This is the Leſſon of Charity here given us, to ſuffer with Patience, and yet to love thoſe, from whom we ſuffer: To ſuffer in Silence, and never to look on the Provocations others give us, as a warrant for our Paſſion, or uncharitable Complaints: They may be eſteem'd ſo by Unbelievers; but this muſt not be the Practice of thoſe who have learnt Chriſt.

In this manner the Wound of Chriſt teach us a Univerſal Peace; but ſince the Leſſons are Difficult, 'tis thou, O Jeſus, muſt imprint them in our Hearts and force our Corruption by the Power of Grace, to yield to thy Inſtructions. Proclaim then Peace this Day, we beſeech thee, to our Souls, and ſo eſtabliſh thy Example in our Hearts, that we may follow the Ways of Peace amidſt all Attempts made againſt us. Let neither our Faith be weakn'd by Doubts, nor our Hope by diſtruſt, nor our Charity by any Provocations;

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Provocations; and let no ſort of Troubles be able to overthrow that Peace we ought to have in thee. Thou haſt ſaid, *Pax vobis*; *Peace be to you*: Grant us now, O Jeſus this Bleſſing.

Second Sunday *after* Eaſter.

GOSPEL,

John C. 10. V. 11. ends V. 16.

I *Am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd gives his Life for his Sheep.* Chriſt fill'd up this Character in a very particular manner, giving his Life for the Salvation of Man, in his Prayers, in his Labours, in his Journeys, in his Preaching, in his Miracles, in all he did, in all he ſuffer'd, and at the End, offering it a Sacrifice on the Croſs for their Redemption. A Paſtor cannot be Good, but by continual Endeavours for coming up to this Character. His daily Buſineſs muſt be to give his Life for his Sheep. He muſt give his Labour for them, in taking Pains for their Inſtruction, and being ever ready to Comfort and Aſſiſt them in all their Spiritual Neceſſities. He muſt give his Thoughts for them, in a perpetual Sollicitude for their good. He muſt give his Prayers for them, in daily petitioning in their behalf, and in rendring God Propitious

tious to them. He muſt give his Peace for them, by drawing upon himſelf the Diſlikes, Calumnies and Inſults of Men, by thoſe Unwelcome Truths, which his Duty obliges him to ſpeak. He muſt give his Friends for them, by letting no Conſiderations prevail for his conniving at ſuch things, which cannot be tolerated, without prejudice to Innocence or Juſtice, and cannot be reprov'd, but with his Loſs. He muſt give away many Satisfactions for them, in conſidering, not only, what is lawful, but likewiſe, what is expedient; that ſo he may not give offence to the Weak, nor Encouragement to the Vicious. Many things may be in themſelves Indifferent, and yet are not ſo to him; becauſe an ill uſe is likely to be made of them by ſome of the Flock, for juſtifying themſelves in ſuch things, which are unjuſtifiable. Hence, how many Inclinations muſt he renounce, that ſo his Life may not countenance, but be a ſtanding Cenſure of their Diſorders, who are under his Care, and which he is oblig'd, by his Poſt, to ſtudy all ways to redreſs? If therefore he obſerves a general Failing in the Flock, in the Love of Vanity and Pride; and that by the expenſive Support of theſe Evils, Children, Families, and Poor, are Robb'd: Muſt not his Life Preach up the Humility and Poverty of the Goſpel, in ſuch a Dreſs

Dreſs, as Pride and Affectation can take no ſhelter under his Example? And if Circumſtances are ſuch, as will not allow the Habit of his Profeſſion, muſt not he, at leaſt, come as near it as he can, and not let the Iniquity of the Times, be made a Plea for a Vain and Extravagant Humour? If the Vice, of his Flock be Intemperance in Drink, and Miſ-ſpending both Time and Money in Idle Company, to the neglect both of Soul and Family Duties; ought not his Example be the Condemnation of their Crimes, by ſcrupulouſly declining ſuch Company, and Idle Meetings, and never ſetting foot within thoſe Places of Sin; that ſo the Exceſſes of the Flock may have no Countenance from his Indiſcreet, tho' otherwiſe Innocent Divertiſement? If the Sin of the Flock be in Extravagant Gaming, in neglect of Order, or Family-diſcipline, or Covetouſneſs; ought not he ſhew his Abhorrence of their Evil Ways, by never joining with their Prodigality, nor even ſtanding to be a Witneſs of it; by being Exact in the Order of his Life, and keeping good Hours; and avoiding every thing, that betrays a love of Intereſt and Money, or has the look of a greedy or graſping Humour?

In this manner he ought to Preach againſt the Diſorders of his Flock, and Condemn all their Irregularities by his Ex-

Example, thus he is to be *Lux Mundi*, a Light ſhewing the Way of God's Commandments. And if this cannot be, but by Violence to Inclination, it is the Taſk he has undertaken, and without it he cannot ſatisfie the Duties of his Charge. He cannot deſerve the Character of Good, but by giving his Life for his Sheep, and in this manner is he daily to give it for them. For if Nature and Corruption ſo far prevail, that his Solicitude is more for his own Quiet and Intereſt, than the Good of his Flock; if by his Example he encourages thoſe Evils in them, which he ought to reform, he is not to be eſteem'd a Shepherd, but a Hireling; and 'tis well if he be not found to have taken part with the Wolves, in helping to devour thoſe, whom he undertook to preſerve.

This Character then of Chriſt being the Good Shepherd, is particularly deſign'd for the Direction of Paſtors but there's another in this Goſpel, which is for the Inſtruction both of Paſtors and People; that is, where Chriſt ſays, *I know my Sheep, and my Sheep know me.* All that are in the Fold of Chriſt, in whatever Degree, cannot be truly his Sheep, except they know Chriſt, as they are known by him. The reaſon is, becauſe they are to follow him; and how ſhall they do this, if they do not know him? He has taught them by his

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Example what they are to do: And hence S. *Auguſtin* ſays, The Son of God became Incarnate, not only to Redeem us by Suffering, but alſo, that being made Man, he might be an Example to us of all Virtues. By his Example he has taught us the Love of our Neighbour: *Love one another, even as I have loved you.* He has taught us Meekneſs; *Learn of me, becauſe I am Meek, and Humble of Heart.* He has taught us to forgive Injuries; *Bear with one another, and forgive one another, if any one has a Complaint againſt another: as our Lord has forgiven you, ſo do you alſo forgive.* He has taught us to ſuffer Reproaches; *The Diſciple is not above his Maſter; if they have call'd the Maſter of the Family,* Beelzebub, *how much more thoſe of his Houſhold?* He has taught us to ſuffer Perſecution; *The Servant is not greater than his Maſter; if they have perſecuted me, they will perſecute you alſo. If they hate you, know, that they have firſt hated me.*

Now Chriſt having given himſelf for a Rule, how ſhall they follow it, if they know not him? There is a neceſſity then of knowing Chriſt; and there can be no hopes, either of a Vertuous Life, or of the Fruit of it, which is Eternal Happineſs, but what is built upon this Knowledge; whence S. *John* ſays, *This is Life Everlaſting, to know thee the Only God, and whom thou*

thou hast sent, Jesus Christ. Where this Knowledge is not, Men must necessarily walk, as S. *Paul* said to the *Ephesians*, in the Vanity of their own Sense, having their Understanding clouded with Darkness: For this Darkness is what every one brings with them into the World; and it cannot be remov'd but by Christ, who is the Light, that enlightens every one, that comes into the World. What then must Christians do? If they think of following Christ, they must learn to know Christ, and him Crucified, because they cannot abide in Christ, except they walk as he walk'd. If the Pastors know him, they will, like him, give their Lives for their Sheep. If the Flock know him, they will make his Example, their Rule, and their Practice will be in all Charity, Patience, Meekness and Humility, because this is the Way he has shew'd them.

What then is all other Knowledge, without this? What is the Learning of Pastors, if they know not Christ? By other Sciences they may gain Applause with Men, but 'tis by the Study of Christ only, they can save their own Souls, and guide their Flock in the Ways of Salvation. What are all other Arts and Accomplishments of the Flock? They may be Ornamental or Gainful, as to this World; but what help are they for gaining that which is Eternal?

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Does not then the Chriſtian World forget its Chriſtianity, when all the Expence in the Education of Youth, is to teach them to be Vain, to be in Love with themſelves, and to court the Admiration of others; when the great Concern is in Modes and Carriage, and the leaſt part of their Care is to learn Chriſt; nay, when they ſo far follow the World, as to forget Chriſt, and his Spirit, and let a Univerſal Pride be Authoriz'd amongſt them? Do not they forget their Chriſtianity, whilſt Fraud, Injuſtice, Oppreſſion, Malice, Diſſentions, Animoſities, Revenge, &c. are in ſuch Repute, that there's more danger of becoming a Reproach amonſt them, by ſtrictly following the Goſpel, than by forſaking it? Is this to be a Chriſtian? 'Tis but too plain therefore, O Jeſus, that amongſt thoſe, who profeſs thy Name, they are but few, that know thee. A great Zeal is pretended for Religion; but where is the Zeal for walking by thy Example, and manifeſting thy Goſpel by the Practice of our Lives? Teach us therefore, we beſeech thee, to be more ſincere in what we profeſs, enlarge our Knowledge of thee; give us a docile Heart, that we may in all things hear thy Voice, and not be Followers of the World, while we make Profeſſion of following thee; for thus only can we be thy Sheep, and thou our Paſtor.

Third Sunday *after* Easter.

GOSPEL,

John C. 16. V. 16. ends. V. 22.

A *Little while, and now you ſhall not ſee me; and again, a little while, and you ſhall ſee me.* Chriſt Exercis'd his Apoſtles with this change of his Abſence and Preſence. He abſented himſelf from them by his Death; he again was preſent with them by his Reſurrection: He abſented himſelf from them by Aſcending into Heaven; he again was preſent, by taking them, after their Deaths, into the participation of his Glory. This ſame is the Exerciſe he gives to all his Elect; ſometimes ſeeming to leave them, and then comforting them again with his Preſence; and by this Conduct, through divers Changes, he prepares them for a more conſtant Diſpoſition of Soul, and leads them to a State Unchangeable. He lets neither their Storms nor Calms to be here without interruption, but with a wonderful variety mixes both Extremes. This S. *Chryſoſtom* obſerves particularly in St. *Joſeph*, who by a ſingular Priviledge of of Grace, being choſen Spouſe to the Mother of Chriſt, was not however priviledged from theſe Trials: For obſerv-

ing the B. Virgin to be with Child, his Spirit was overwhelm'd with great Diſquiets; but preſently an Angel is ſent, who removes all his Fears. Then ſeeing Jeſus born, his Soul was enlarg'd with unſpeakable Joy; but this Joy is ſoon follow'd with a ſurprizing Terror, when he ſaw the whole City in Commotion, and a Jealous King ſeeking the Life of the Child. This Terror is again ſweetn'd with unexpected Comforts, when an unuſual Star brings the Wiſe Men from the Eaſt, to Adore, and make their Offerings to their New-born King: But this Comfort is check'd with new Dangers; *Herod* deſigns to deſtroy the Child, and they muſt retire into a foraign Land.

If this was the Method of God with this Holy Patriarch, and Jeſus is no ſooner Born into the World, but he has his Share in it; muſt not all Faithful Souls here prepare themſelves againſt all ſurprize, if they experience no Comforts laſting, and that their moſt deſirable Peace is interrupted with frequent Diſquiets? Their Buſineſs ought rather to be, in learning to ſubmit to this Order of Providence, and to make that Improvement under it, as is deſign'd by him, whoſe Wiſdom cannot be queſtion'd in the Appointment.

There is no Diſpoſition more neceſſary for a Chriſtian, than that of a true diſ-

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eſteem of himſelf, and of all things in this World: And nothing can lead more directly to this, than the Experience of his own Inconſtancy, and of all other things about him. 'Tis good, he ſhould be convinc'd, that all things paſs, and that his moſt ſettled Judgments are uncertain. How often does he think, when he is under the weight of Evils, that he ſhall never more have Comfort? And yet he finds Relief again, either by being deliver'd from his Oppreſſion; or in the patient ſupport of that, which before he believ'd to be intolerable. How often does he imagine, in time of interior Peace, that he ſhall never more be mov'd: *Dixi in abundantia mea*; *non movebor in æternum*; and the Weakneſs, that follows upon this Preſumption, does it not more fully convince him of his Inconſtancy, than if he had been never forced from his ground?

By theſe Viciſſitudes then, and Changes, he comes at length to frame this ſettled Judgment of himſelf; That he is without force, without vigour; that he has nothing of his own to truſt to, and therefore is in a neceſſary dependance on the Divine Grace, to ſecure him againſt the Conſequences of his own Weakneſs and Uncertainty. By the Experience of this Inconſtancy, he learns to deſire with more earneſtneſs that Unchangeable Reſt, which, in

the other Life, ſhall be the Recompence of the Juſt, and to ſeek Eſtabliſhment in the Divine Grace, whereby he may come to that Happy State.

The Chriſtian then muſt ſet this down for a ſtanding Principle; That Uniformity is not to be expected in this Life, either as to Body or Soul. This Principle, when under Trouble, is to be his Defence againſt Anxiety and Deſpair; the ſame, in time of Peace, is to ballance his Mind againſt Exceſs of Confidence and Preſumption. For ſince Chriſt here in expreſs Terms foretold his Apoſtles, that they ſhould weep and mourn, while the World rejoic'd, all the true Servants of Chriſt may hence know, what Portion to expect; and in this place of Baniſhment, rather to look for Trouble than Peace. This is unavoidable, as to their Spiritual State; becauſe this Life being appointed them, not to live to themſelves, and the World, but to learn to die to both, by a laborious diſ engagement from all Carnal and Corrupt Affections, which is the Death of the Old Man, repreſented by the Death of Chriſt; hence the whole time of Chriſtians here, comes to be a Life of Mourning and Tears, becauſe there is no forſaking that without Grief, which is retain'd with Satisfaction, and has Pleaſure in the Enjoyment; there is no dying to the

the World without Trouble and Violence, since 'tis by this Violence they must die to the World; And is it not hence plain, that while the World rejoyces, they must be in mourning; since, while those of the World are waiting upon their Inclinations, studying all ways to gratify both themselves and the World, and turning all the Blessings of God to this vile End, these are labouring to mortify the same Inclinations, by denying them what with most earnestness they desire?

Again, as to their Temporal Affairs, they cannot fail of frequent occasions of Mourning; because, on the one side, God designing to perfect them in what they propose, permits them not to have long rest or satisfaction in Creatures, and therefore, on the motive of his Goodness towards them, sometimes deprives them of one Object of their Affections, sometimes of another; and otherways thwarts them with many Difficulties, that by these trials they may come to know themselves, and observing thus both their Wants and Weaknesses, may see which way to direct their Labours and Prayers, and so gain a more perfect command of themselves. Then, on the other side, the World seldom fails of giving them many uneasy Exercises, First, By the course of its profess'd Impiety and Injustice, which

they cannot ſee without Grief. Secondly, By raiſing Jealouſies, Calumnies, and Scandals, in their diſfavour; and often managing theſe with ſo much dexterity, as to draw even the Good into an Intereſt againſt them. Thirdly, By making the Ways of Vertue ſo difficult, that they cannot poſſibly eſpouſe the Cauſe of Juſtice, Innocence, and Truth, but by making all thoſe their Enemies, who love nothing but Flattery and Diſſimulation, and cannot bear either Oppoſition or Reproof, tho' in the moſt unwarrantable Ways, without being exaſperated againſt thoſe that undertake it; whence all, that know them, are under the neceſſity of betraying the Cauſe of Virtue, by a baſe Connivance, or of loſing their Favour by being Advocates for it. Thus the Portion of the Good, either from one ſide or other, comes to have a great mixture of Bitterneſs with it, and the Words of Chriſt are generally verified in them: *Amen, Amen*, I ſay to you, you ſhall mourn and weep, but the World ſhall rejoice.

But however, tho' theſe Difficulties ſhould continue even till Death, there is ſtill this Comfort, that all theſe Evils, as Chriſt has promis'd, ſhall in the other Life be chang'd into endleſs Joys; and can it be then reaſonable to make a difficulty

culty in ſubmitting to them? For what are the Evils of this Life, in compariſon of Eternity? They are not ſo much as a Minuite in proportion to our Life, and who would not imbrace ſo ſhort a Suffering, when 'tis for avoiding that, which is Eternal, and to be recompenc'd with Joy, that is Infinite? We are all, one way or other, in continual Sollicitude and Labour; and what is it generally for, but ſuch things, whoſe quiet Enjoyment is many times ſhorter, than the trouble of getting them, and when otherwiſe, 'tis for that which muſt ſoon end? Since therefore we are here to Suffer, is it not the beſt Management, ſo to order it, that it may be the Purchaſe of Everlaſting Happineſs? Thus, O God, may we learn to be Wiſe. Give us Grace peaceably to ſubmit to all thy Appointments; may neither Quiet make us Preſume, nor Troubles deject us; but may all be ballanc'd with ſuch Moderation of Spirit, as to improve both in Calms and Storms.

Fourth Sunday *after* Eaſter.

GOSPEL,

John C. 16. V. 5. ends V. 15.

I *Go to him, that ſent me, and none of you ask me, Whither doſt thou go?*

The Apoſtles were ſo much ſeiz'd with the News of Chriſt's departure from them, and of the Perſecution they were to ſuffer, that they think not of enquiring, whether he was going, nor how they were to prepare to follow him. But Chriſt knowing the weakneſs of Man, and diſtinguiſhing betwixt that want of Attention, which is occaſion'd by Indifferency and Coldneſs, and that, which is the Effect of ſome ſurprize caſting a preſent damp on the Spirits, does not preſs the Apoſtles on this Point, but giving them a paſſing Reproof to remind them of their Weakneſs, Comforts them in the following words; I ſay to you the Truth; 'tis convenient for you, that I go; for if I go not, the Comforter will not come to you.

It is impoſſible ſo to live, amidſt the various Occurrences of this World, but that ſometimes Chriſtians will be under the ſame Oppreſſion with the Apoſtles at this time, and Sadneſs will fill their Hearts. The many Ties we have in this World of Nature and Affection, the Dependence we have on Friends, the great Intereſt we have for our Subſiſtance, the Concern we have in the Publick, the Sollicitude we are bound to have for the well-being of our Corporal and Spiritual State, all afford Matter for this Diſturbance; becauſe ther is

is not one of theſe things, to which we are thus link'd by Affection or Intereſt, but what are all ſubject to change, and ſuch change, as cannot but make ſome impreſſion of ſadneſs upon the Mind. This is the Effect of a Weakneſs inſeparable from our Condition in this Mortal State, which being made ſenſible, cannot but feel, when 'tis touch'd to the quick in any ſenſible Part; but however, if this goes no farther, than it did in the Apoſtles, by way of ſurprize, tho' it be a hindrance for the time to the greateſt Duties, in putting a ſtop to all, yet it is a Weakneſs, that carries its Excuſe with it, and deſerves rather Compaſſion, than any ſharp Reproof. This may ſerve for a Caution to all Tender Souls, not to diſquiet themſelves with the apprehenſion of having grievouſly, offended, when they have been thus ſurpriz'd with Grief; as likewiſe to thoſe, under whoſe Care they are, to endeavour to Heal ſuch Wounds, rather with Lenitives, that Comfort, than Corroſives, which exaſperate the Sore; leſt, otherwiſe, they encreaſe the Trouble, tho' they change the Subject, in making them more unreaſonably Anxious for their imagin'd Offence, than they were for their Misfortune; which, tho' having now a better Face, is yet as prejudicial to the Soul, and more difficult to be Cur'd.

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But the Caſe is very different, if ſuch ſurprizing Grief be either careleſly or affectedly indulg'd; for then, what was an excuſable Weakneſs in the beginning, becomes Criminal in the Progreſs; for there is nothing, except profeſs'd Vice, more deſtructive of all that is good; it being one of the moſt ſubtle Contrivances of the Enemy, by which he overthrows Virtue, without the appearance of Vice: It being by this way he ſo weakens the Spirits, as firſt to render the Soul uncapable of all brave Attempts, ſuch as are neceſſary in the Soldiers of Chriſt; then takes off all reliſh of Spiritual Duties, perſwades them to be all uſeleſs, and to no purpoſe; thus, by degrees, he leſſens both Faith and Hope, oppreſſing the Mind with Darkneſs and Fears, and ſuggeſting ſuch Crouds of wild Imaginations, not ſparing even the Divinity it ſelf, that it is now upon the brink of Deſpair, and nothing but a Miraculous Grace can ſupport it againſt the force of theſe Terrors.

Where it does not ariſe to this heat, 'tis however attended with ſo many ill Conſequences, either of a ſlothful heavineſs, or a peeviſh uneaſineſs, or of perplexing the Conſcience with endleſs Fears, that it ought to be every Chriſtian's Care to defend themſelves againſt it; even ſo, as not to give way to any degree of

of Anxiety, Melancholly, or Dejection, upon any Account whatever; for that there is a certain Indiſcretion in all ſuch yielding; and it can ſeldom be done without the Guilt of Sin, by putting that to the hazard of an ungovernable Paſſion, which ought to be preſerv'd with greater Care.

But their Danger is not from Grief only, but from whatever elſe ſo poſſeſſes the Mind, as to put by all Concern of obſerving the Way, in which they are, and of the Place, to which they ought to go. This was the overſight here reprov'd in the Apoſtles; their trouble upon the Thoughts of loſing their Maſter, was in it ſelf Innocent, and could deſerve no Cenſure; but whilſt it ſo takes up their Mind, as to exclude all Enquiry of the Way, in which they were to go, here it becomes reprovable, and is no longer to be tolerated in them. All Chriſtians have the ſame Way to go, as the Apoſtles had; and there being a daily Neceſſity of obſerving, whether they go right, all that muſt be ſet down as Faulty, which hinders them from making this Enquiry. The queſtion therefore they are every Day to put to themſelves, is, Whether going on in the Way, in which they at preſent are, will bring them to their Journeys end? For if this be not a part of their conſtant Con-

Concern, their Profeſſion and Faith are vain, and their Religion will avail them nothing. It is not enough to obſerve, that they give ſome time to Prayer and Reading, and that they make Reſolutions of doing well; for this may be no more, than looking towards the end of their Journey, accompanied with ſome weak Deſires of coming at length to it; but as propoſing a Journey, and preparing for it, will never bring a Man to the end, if after ſuch propoſals, he goes out of the Way, that leads to it: So it is here; for if Chriſtians every Day think of Heaven and Pray to come to it, and afterwards are but little Sollicitous of their Steps, but live on in ſuch a way as to have their Backs turn'd upon God, and his Commandments, is this likely ever to bring them to him?

This is rather the Folly of him mention'd in the Goſpel, who beginning to Build a Tower, had not wherewith to finiſh it. Chriſtian, thou haſt undertaken a Journey; art thou in a way of finiſhing it? Will the Method of thy preſent Life bring thee to Heaven? If Death ſhould now ſeize thee, is thy Soul in a Diſpoſition of being united to God? Is it thy daily Buſineſs to keep the Commandments? Doſt thou walk according to the Spirit of Chriſt, and his Goſpel, by ſeriouſly labouring

bouring to overcome the World, and to ſubdue all thoſe Paſſions, which carry thee from God? If this Work be not yet done, where is the ſtop? If thou haſt often attempted it, but without Effect, is not this a ſign of ſomething being wanting in thee; that thou muſt yet take more Pains, be ſtill more in earneſt, than hitherto; and that if thou goeſt on, as uſual only, thy Work will never be done?

Here is the Examen, this the Enquiry thou art daily to make of thy ſelf. If thou art wanting in it, it is an Argument of thy thoughts being otherwiſe taken up; and be aſſur'd, whatever it be, that ſo poſſeſſes thy Mind, as to exclude this neceſſary Enquiry, it is all of Evil. If it be the Immoderate love of the World, or of thy Self; if it be Senſuality, Intemperance, or other Vice, theſe are doubly Evil, both in themſelves, and in withdrawing thee from thy only neceſſary Work. If it be Fondneſs of Company, or Divertiſements, if the eagerneſs of Gain, if an exceſſive Sollicitude for thy worldly Affairs, &c. tho' the principal Object of theſe be never ſo innocent, yet can that be eſteem'd Innocent, which takes thy Heart from God, and excludes all that Sollicitude, by which thou ſhouldſt look into thy ſelf, and conſider of the

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Ways, that lead to him? What if these very Motives should prevail on thee to be unjust to thy Neighbour, couldst thou then esteem thy self guiltless? and art thou less Criminal, when by them thou art drawn into the greatest of all Injustices, which is that against thy own Soul, and thy God?

Deceive not therefore thy self, for tho' with all thy Care, thou canst no be exempt from some Failings; yet if thou com'st to that degree of Indifferency or Neglect, as not to observe thy Ways, nor consider of the Place, to which thou art going, let the occasion of it be what it will, it is a Criminal State, and such, as admits of no Excuse. O God, if this be so, how unhappy are we, amidst the necessary Engagements, the grateful Sollicitations, and distracting terrors of this Life! We cannot but feel them, and yet to open our Hearts to them, cannot be without danger of excluding thee. Establish us, we beseech thee, amidst all these Difficulties; and as long as we are on the Way, permit nothing to take from our Hearts the Sollicitude of going right,

Fifth Sunday *after* Eaſter.

GOSPEL,

John C. 16. V. 23. ends V. 30.

Whatever you ſhall ask the Father in my Name, he will give you. Our B. Redeemer having foretold his Apoſtles, in this Chapter, the Perſecutions they were to ſuffer in this Life, now gives them Comfort, in the Aſſurance of his Eternal Father being ready to help them; and that whatever they ſhould ask in his Name, either for the ſupply of their Wants, or for the ſupport of their Weakneſs, it ſhould be granted them. Great Comfort for Poor Men, who being to be expos'd to the Malice of Men and Devils, were now aſſur'd of having God on their ſides, and the Infinite Treaſures of his Power and Goodneſs to be open'd to them upon their demand. This ſame is the Comfort of all Good Chriſtians, who being to ſtruggle with the Infirmities of a Corrupt Nature, with the Wickedneſs of a Perverſe World, and the ſubtle Importunities of a Malicious Enemy, have yet the Power and Goodneſs of God, to reſt on, which are ingag'd in their Aſſiſtance by the ſame Promiſes, that were made to the Apoſtles, and upon the ſame Conditions

of

of Asking it of the Father in the Name of Christ.

Here then may Christians see, that all there Dependance being on God, their Principal Means for obtaining his Assistance, is by Prayer; and that if they are sensible of their own Wants, or Sollicitous for his Help, this Sense and Sollicitude must be manifested in their Prayers. It is a Point of great Concern, because of our necessary Dependance on the Divine Help; and of great Difficulty, because of the Infinite Dissipations, to which we are subject; and therefore to be perform'd with Care, proportion'd both to the Concern and Difficulty of it.

The first Principal Care is to be, in being punctual to the Time of Prayer. Our Wants are daily, and therefore Prayer ought to be so too; and because the Business and Distractions of Life are many, these will often prove a Hindrance to Prayer, if due Care be not us'd for preventing it. Those therefore, who are engag'd in Business, ought to have their Hearts fully possess'd with this Truth, that their greatest Business is to obtain the Blessing of Heaven, and that this is necessary for them in whatever they undertake; and on this Consideration, are not to think it safe, to set their Hands to any thing, till they have first recommended themselves

ſelves to God, and begg'd him to accompany them in all they do. If this cannot be done eaſily, it muſt be done with difficulty; and Contrivance muſt be us'd, for performing that which cannot be omitted without a Fault. An induſtrious Mind, that is in earneſt with its Duty, will find ways for ſatisfying it; and 'tis an Argument of Sloth or Indifferency, to be eaſy in admitting Excuſes. Let thoſe therefore, who are ſubject to it, but examine themſelves, and they will diſcover it to be the Effect of Careleſſneſs; and that were they more in Earneſt, they would be more Exact in this Duty. If this Omiſſion then be a Fault in Perſons of Buſineſs, what muſt it be in thoſe, who have none; but by indulging themſelves in Sleep, Sloth, and the Diſorders of an undiſciplin'd Life, cannot find leiſure for Prayer, but leave it to hazard, and then are eaſy in perſwading themſelves, that they do it, when they can? But why do I mention theſe here, as if they were to be inſtructed in the Duty of Prayer? When the thing they want, is to be taught to believe in God, and that there's an Eternal State to come: For theſe can be no more than Imaginary Truths to them, who feel no more weight of them upon their Spirits, than if they were Dreams.

As

As to neglect the time of Prayer is a Fault, so it is another like it, to make delays in going to it, and to be ever the last that appears, when all are Summon'd to meet in Publick. This may be the Case of the best sometimes; but where-ever it is Customary in any, set a Mark upon those Persons; for there is something wanting at the bottom; either they know not themselves, or their dependance on God, who than think they gain, when they Steal from him, and from the help they ought to give to their own Souls.

If this be reprovable, so 'tis likewise to Pray in an undecent manner: For tho' God regards the Heart, and excepts against no Posture, when Christians do sincerely what they can, and are disabled by Infirmity: Yet when 'tis the Effect of Sloth or Indifferency, there is so much of Irreverence in it, that I think all those, who have a Sense of God's Presence, or a Desire of obtaining what they ask, will be careful not to bring this *Caveat* with them, against their own Petitions. Where there is the true Spirit of Penance, or a Zeal for God's Honour, there will be no Allowance, without Necessity, for this Nice and Clownish Worship.

'Tis another Fault in Christians, to run over their Prayers in such hast, that there's

there's nothing but Hurry and Confuſion, and no Decency in what they do. Holy Actions ought to be perform'd in a Holy Manner, ſuch as ſpeaks both a Senſe of our own Unworthineſs, and of his Infinite Sanctity and Majeſty, to whom we make our Addreſs, or before whom we Adore; even ſo as to reſemble, in the beſt manner we can, the Choirs of Bleſſed Spirits above, in the Homage they pay to him, that ſits on the Throne. And what is there of this in that recital of Prayers, where there is nothing but a Sacrilegious Clipping, or a Confus'd Jumble of Words; where Chriſtians ſpeak to God in ſuch a manner, as they could not do the like to a Footman without Bluſhing; where by ſhewing themſelves in haſt to be gone, they Affront God to his Face, while they pretended to ask Bleſſings of him? And how then muſt this look at the Alter, in thoſe, who perform the moſt Sacred Functions, and ought to give Example to others of all Holineſs, and yet are ſo precipitate in what they ſay and do themſelves, and ſo undecently aſſiſted by ſuch as mumble here and there a Word, and ſtumble over all the reſt; that undertaking to Celebrate the higheſt Myſteries, and even in the Perſon of Chriſt, they ſeem to do all without the leaſt ſign of Chriſt's Spirit in them. Deliver, O God, thy Altar from

ſuch

ſuch Scandals, and ſecure me by thy Grace from ever having any part in them.

There is ſtill another general Fault in this Exerciſe, and that is, to Pray without Attention, and in ſuch a negligent manner, that what is pretended as Prayer, becomes nothing leſs than Sin. It is not, however expected, that Prayer, in this Mortal State, can be perform'd without Diſtractions; Nature is too weak, and the Devil too buſie for this; but ſtill the Heart may be ſo watchful, as upon the firſt obſerving, to repel whatever Thoughts are unſuitable for that time; they, who uſe this Violence with themſelves, may have Confidence, that God will Pardon whatever Diſtractions are the Effect, not of Contempt or Negligence, but of Infirmity only; for he knows our Weakneſs, and will ſhew Mercy.

But while Chriſtians make Propoſals of ſtanding againſt Diſtractions, they muſt remember, this is not to be the Work of Prayer-time only, but rather of the whole Life; for if the Soul be not in a kind of quiet, how ſhould it Pray quietly? Hence their great Intereſt, is to gain a Compoſure of Mind, by moderating all kind of Paſſions, by leſs'ning their Deſires, by abating all manner of Sollicitude, by ſtudying to do all with Fidelity; but not to be Anxious about the Succeſs, nor in what the

the World ſhall ſay; they who can gain this Point, of reſting in the Will of God, are in the beſt Diſpoſition of Prayer: But where the Soul is open to all manner of Diſtractions, there can be no more hopes of quiet Prayer, than in the midſt of a Rabble.

Theſe Directions may be ſome Helps for Praying in the Name of Chriſt: Teach us, O God, to perform this Duty; for ſince all our Help and Security, in this our ſtate of Weakneſs and Danger, is from thy Grace, we muſt certainly be Miſerable, if we learn not to ask it, as we ought.

Aſcenſion-Day.

GOSPEL,

Mark C. 16. V. 14. to the end.

JEſus was taken up into Heaven, and ſits at the Right Hand of God. On this Day of the Aſcenſion, all Chriſtians ought to join with the Choirs above, in their Joy for Chriſt's Triumphs on Earth being now Conſummated in Herven, at the Right Hand of his Father. This Place was due to his Victories over Sin and Death, and Thanks are due from us, for that he has made both his Sufferings and Triumphs our Intereſt, in Dying for our Redemption, and now Aſcending for our Glorification.

Glorification. Let us therefore now Celebrate this Feſtival, not in Ceremony only, but ſo, that God may be honour'd and we advantag'd by it.

And, to begin well, let us join our ſelves in Spirit with the Apoſtles on Mount *Olevet*; and as Chriſt was pleas'd before his Aſcenſion, to lift up his Hands, and giving his Bleſſing to them, *Elevatis manibus benedixit eis*; ſo let us beg a part in the Bleſſing of the Day. His Adorable Hands lifted up, ſtretch'd forth, pierc'd and faſtn'd to the Croſs, as Hands of Malediction, are for this become the Fountain of all Bleſſings upon Earth, and of all Graces upon his Church. Lift up now Bleſſed Jeſus, thoſe Divine Hands, and ſtretch them over us, for on their Power and Mercy depends our Eternal Lot; pour forth thoſe Bleſſings upon us, which may ſeparate our Hearts from the Earth and unite us to thee.

This ought to be one principal Fruit of this preſent Solemnity; for ſince Chriſt aſcended, to prepare for us Seats of Bliſs, we can no otherwiſe hope to come to the Poſſeſſion of them, but by raiſing our Hearts above the Earth, and deſiring to be united with God. And is this the Diſpoſition now requir'd? How Miſerable then am I, who have my Heart link'd to Earth with ſo many Chains, that I can no ſooner

preſently drawn back, as if I were going out of my Way! How then am I to expect a Place above, when all that is within me, preſſes me down to the Earth; and I cannot ſay, I deſire to leave it, but I muſt ſuſpect it of Formality, and doubt the Truth of the Profeſſion!

Here then, while Chriſt's Aſcenſion is the Subject of a Common Joy, in me it is the Occaſion of Tears, ſince Heaven opening to receive him, ſhews me, what ought to be the Diſpoſition of my Soul, and likewiſe how unlike I am to what I ought to be. What therefore can I do, but proſtrate my ſelf before thee, O Jeſus, and again beg thy Bleſſing! Lift up then now in Heaven thy Hands of Power and Mercy, and ſeparate my Heart from the love of the World; give me a new Spirit, even ſuch a Spirit, by which I may thirſt after thee, and labour all my Life to overcome that Corruption, which has hitherto been my Misfortune, in unhappily faſtning me to the Earth, and making me earneſt in ſeeking, what I ought to deſpiſe.

This muſt be the Preparation of all thoſe, who think in earneſt of following their Redeemer; they muſt conſider the Place, which has receiv'd him, and what are the Conditions of it. Can Vice have their admittance? Is there place for Sen-

ſuality, Intemperance, Covetouſneſs, Injuſtice, Frauds, Oppreſſion, Malice, Uncharitableneſs, Revenge? Can Ambition enter there? Or Pride, Vanity, or Self-love? Will it receive thoſe, who have their Souls wholly diſſipated with the Follies of this World, or thoſe, who ſtudy nothing here, but how to pleaſe themſelves in all that a ſlothful and idle Humour can ſuggeſt? If nothing of this can be admitted into Heaven, ought it not to be the Buſineſs of every one, to labour in diſengaging themſelves from theſe Evils, which otherwiſe will ſhut Heaven againſt them? For how can their Souls, at Death, be fit for Heaven, which here live one in ſuch Diſorders, as are inconſiſtent with it?

Whoever therefore thinks ſeriouſly of aſcending with Chriſt to Heaven, muſt every Day learn to aſcend; and as every one finds the Way long and difficult, ſo they muſt every Day take ſome ſteps, that ſo at length, they may happily finiſh their Journey, They muſt then aſcend ſomething every Day. If the love of Riches faſtens them to the Earth, they muſt work their Hearts, by degrees, into that indifferency, as to diſengage them from this Clog. If Pride or Ambition keeps down their Souls, they muſt look into the emptineſs of all they admire, and learn, with Contempt, to ſet their Feet upon

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all that, to which now they are Slaves. If the Follies of Idleneſs Company, and Divertiſements, confine their Happineſs to Earth, they muſt ſet the Coucern of their Eternal State againſt them, and thus get above the Power of theſe Charms. If Sloth tyes their Feet, or Coldneſs puts a damp on their Spirits, they muſt give a ſeaſonable look into Hell, and let that Fire looſe their Bonds; and thawing their frozen Hearts, quicken them with ſome vigorous Heat. If worldly Sollicitude or Trouble oppreſſes their Mind, they muſt ſtudy the Goſpel, and by learning to undervalue, what now ſeems ſo weighty, gain new liberty to their Souls.

In this manner, if all look into themſelves, and obſerving, what part of the Earth it is, that lyes upon them; what Paſſion it is, that makes their Heart Captive to this World, then uſe ſincere Endeavours for recovering their freedom, there will be thus laid a Foundation of a well grounded hope, that one Day they ſhall be rais'd above the Earth, and admitted to the participation of that Happineſs, into which Chriſt enter'd this Day. A Happineſs, by which they ſhall be made part of that Kingdom, where God only Reigns; and which is not to be obtain'd, but by thoſe, who here labour to bring themſelves into ſubjection to God, and

begin that Kingdom here, which they deſire to be Conſummated in Heaven.

Where this Method is not taken, I cannot think ſuch Chriſtians have any Concern in this Feſtival, or any reaſon to hope for that Joy, to which it calls our Thoughts. For ſince a State of Sin, without juſt Deſires, and Endeavours for Amendment, is a State reſembling that of the Devils; it cannot be a preparation for Heaven, but for Hell, and to that place are ſuch Sinners every Day deſcending; what then have they to do with the Aſcenſion of our Lord? And as for thoſe, who, tho' not in the depth of Sin, yet live careleſs of Eternity, having their Hearts crampt with Sloth, or bent on every thing, but God; how little a part have they? For may not theſe Walls have as much right to Heaven, as thoſe, who think little more of it, than theſe inſenſible Creatures; who ſtand as unmov'd, in regard of Heaven, as they, and only abuſe whatever advantages they have above them, to the ſeeking themſelves? If Self-love and Eaſe have the Promiſes of Bliſs, theſe may join in their Hopes; but ſuch Promiſes are not recorded in our Goſpel.

Thoſe only then are here to raiſe their Hopes, who honouring Chriſt Aſcending, accompany him in their Deſires, think themſelves unhappy in their Pilgrimage, and

and in the many Hazards of the Way yet to come; who conſider what their Hazards and Hindrances are, and by earneſt, and even untir'd Endeavours for removing them, give proof, that their Diſtance from God is not Voluntary, but only their Misfortune. Where there are theſe Deſires and Endeavours, there are ſo many ſteps towards Heaven, and ſuch Chriſtians aſcend daily towards God. Give us, O Jeſus, a true Spirit, by which we may raiſe our ſelves above the Earth; and ſince thou know'ſt our Weakneſs, let thy Grace be proportion'd to it, that we may no longer lye buried under the Earth, but on this Day of thy Aſcenſion, begin now to aſcend in Deſires with thee, and go on ſtill aſcending, till we come to the Joys of thy Preſence.

Sunday *within the* Octave *of the* Aſcenſion.

GOSPEL,

John C. 15. V. 26. ends C. 16. V. 4.

HE (the Comforter) *ſhall give teſtimony of me: And you ſhall give teſtimony of me.* This is part of the Diſcourſe Chriſt made to his Apoſtles, after his laſt Supper, wherein he promis'd the

the Holy Ghoſt ſhould come upon them; and Comforts the Faithful of all Ages, in ſhewing them the ſure Foundation of their Faith; to wit, That all the Truths of Faith ſhould be Authoriz'd by the double Evidence of Two Witneſſes; the one External, which is that of the Apoſtles; the other Internal, which is that of the Holy Ghoſt. He was not pleas'd, that the ordinary way of receiving his Faith, ſhould be by Inſpiration only of the Holy Spirit, but has join'd it with the Teſtimony of the Apoſtles, whence there is no Truth belongs to Faith, but what was taught by the Apoſtles either by Writing or Preaching, and is convey'd down to all Ages by the Holy Scriptures, or Tradition of the Church, which has the Holy Ghoſt to watch over it, and be its Security in what it delivers.

This Appointment of the Divine Wiſdom, is that, which preſerves the Faith of Chriſtians from all Illuſion: For to how much of this would it be expos'd, were the pretext of Inſpiration enough for any Doctrine to be receiv'd as an Article of Faith? Would not then every one advance his own Thoughts, as Inſpir'd from above, without any poſſibility of diſtinguiſhing, who is in the right, and who in the wrong? Wherefore Jeſus Chriſt would not leave his Doctrine to this Method of

Uncertainty

Uncertainty and Confuſion, but requires the Concurring Teſtimonies of his Holy Spirit, and the Apoſtles; and in this Condemns all their Preſumption, who not regarding what has been deliver'd from the Apoſtles, ſet up their own Private Sentiments, as the Dictates of the Holy Ghoſt.

But the Apoſtles did not give Teſtimony of Chriſt by their Doctrine only, but by their Lives and Deaths, in Preaching his Goſpel by their Example, and Sealing the Truth of it with their Blood. Thus all Paſtors ought to bear Witneſs of Chriſt: Firſt, By Preaching him. Secondly, By Living ſo, that Chriſt be manifeſted in them. Thirdly, By being in a Preparation of giving their Lives for him. In theſe three ways they are to be Witneſſes of Chriſt: To be ſilent then, when they have liberty of ſpeaking, is ſuppreſſing their Evidence; and ſo to take part with the World, as to Encourage it in its admir'd Follies and Extravagancies; what is this, but forſaking the Cauſe of Chriſt, ſuch as would be eſteem'd Treachery in Courts of Judicature, and, I fear, will be ſo judg'd at Chriſt's Tribunal? And are theſe prepar'd to give their Lives for Chriſt? O God, how will they die for thy Goſpel, who do not live by thy Goſpel!

If Paſtors are to give Teſtimony of Chriſt, the Flock muſt not think themſelves

ſelves exempt from this Common Duty. All that believe in Chriſt, muſt bear Witneſs of him, the Members muſt live by the ſame Spirit with the Head. Thus St. *Paul* writing to the Faithful, deſires, that Chriſt may be manifeſted and form'd in them, that they would walk, even as Chriſt walk'd. This is bearing witneſs of Chriſt, this is propagating his Goſpel, this is giving Evidence of his Spirit, this is confounding their Diſorders, who live according to the Fleſh, and the World. In this manner then all are bound to be Witneſſes of Chriſt; ſome in a more particular manner, as Parents in regard of their Children, Maſters in regard of their Servants, *&c.* becauſe theſe acting by a particular Deputation from Chriſt, and as his Vicegerents; and thoſe under their Care being enjoin'd to honour Chriſt in them, they muſt look on themſelves as his Repreſentatives, and therefore ought ſo to live by his Spirit, that it may be Communicated to thoſe in their Charge, and his Doctrine be confirm'd in them by their Example.

Where there is not this particular Tie, there is however ſtill this Obligation upon them, ariſing from the Connection they are bound to have with Chriſt, their Head, and with the Faithful, as their Fellow-Members; upon which Conſideration, all

Chriſtians

Chriſtians are to do every thing to the Edification of their Neighbour; *Omnia ad ædificationem fiant*; they are to do good, not only before God, but alſo before Men; they are to abſtain from the appearance of Evil; their Moderation is to be known to all Men; but this, not upon any Motive of gaining Eſteem with the World, but that God may be glorified, and their Neighbour enlightned and ſpurr'd on to good, by their Example; that ſo it may be verified of all, what the Apoſtle ſaid of the *Corinthians*, *Veſtra æmulatio provocavit plurimos*; your good Example has encourag'd many: And of the *Theſſalonians*, *Facta eſtis forma*; you are become a Pattern to all, that have receiv'd the Faith in *Macedonia*. Thus were thoſe primitive Chriſtians Witneſſes of Chriſt; and their Commendation ſhews, in what manner all others ought to bear Teſtimony of him

But this Obligation is ſtill more extended in regard of thoſe, who, being yet in Darkneſs, are Enemies to the Truth; that good Example may help to the removing their ill Impreſſions, and bringing them to the Light. Upon which Motive St. *Paul* commanded the *Theſſalonians*, *Præcipimus vobis*, to walk with great uprightneſs towards thoſe, who are out of the Church; and the *Philippians*, to live without Re-

proof, and as the Children of God, in the midſt of a wicked and perverſe Nation, and to be as ſo many Lights to them: And St. *Peter* adviſing all Chriſtians, that their Converſation be good amongſt Unbelievers, gives the reaſon; That whereas, ſays he, they ſpeak Evil of you, as of Workers of Iniquity, conſidering you by your good Works, they may glorifie God in the Day of their Viſitation.

Upon theſe Conſiderations, all, that profeſs the Faith of Chriſt, ought to be Witneſſes of Chriſt; and the Obligition is ſo preſſing, that whoever does otherwiſe, muſt be very Criminal in the ſight of God. The reaſon is becauſe none can be remarkably Evil, but beſides their Sin againſt God, they muſt neceſſarily give Offence to ſome, give Encouragement to others to Tranſgreſs, and unavoidably bring a Scandal upon the Church, in giving occaſion to deluded Souls of meaſuring its Doctrine by their Iniquity, and to its profeſs'd Enemies of Blaſpheming it. Theſe are Evils enough to terrify any thinking Soul, and keep it under a ſtrict reſtraint: Since drawing others into Sin, is acting the Devil's part, in the Ruin of Souls: Giving offence to the weak, has many Woes pronounc'd againſt it, ſuch as render his Unhappineſs more preferrable; who, with a Mill-ſtone about his Neck, is

thrown into the Sea. And as for bringing a Scandal on the Church, let thoſe meaſure the Guilt of it, that can: For if their number be conſider'd, who being render'd averſe to the Ways of Truth, by the Extravagancies of its Profeſſors, never more can be perſwaded to look there for it, where it is to be found, the Blindneſs and Miſcarriage of ſo many Souls will be a Confuſion too great, for thoſe who have given the occaſion, to ſtand under it without Deſpair. And if it were well conſider'd, how much, beſides Notorious Crimes, even ordinary Paſſion, raſh Oaths, looſneſs of Behaviour or Diſcourſe, lay the grounds of, or ſtrengthen ſuch an Averſion, whilſt, with too many, all this is thrown upon the Church, I believe it would oblige all to obſerve a much greater ſtrictneſs, than they do; that ſo they may not bring the Guilt of others Souls upon their Heads; nor be reproach'd as unnatural Children, in confirming thoſe, who are in Rebellion againſt their Mother. O God, and how much is there of this amongſt thoſe, who ſay, they belong to thee! By whom is Truth more injur'd, than by its own Profeſſors! Remedy, we beſeech thee, this Evil; and ſince all of us are call'd to be Witneſſes of Chriſt, grant, we may ſatisfie this general Duty, and that neither Paſtors nor People may betray

betray his Cauſe, either by Vice, Raſhneſs, or Indiſcretion.

Whit-Sunday.

GOSPEL,

John C. 14. V. 23. to the end.

THE Holy Ghoſt *the Comforter, whom the Father ſends in my Name, will teach you all things, and ſuggeſt all things to you, whatſoever I ſhall ſay to you.* The Appſtles were Commanded to inſtruct all Nations in the Faith of Chriſt, and the Holy Ghoſt is here promis'd to be their Maſter, to teach and ſuggeſt all things to them. In this is laid a Sure Foundation of the Chriſtian and Catholick Church, whilſt thoſe are appointed the Paſtors of it, who are not only under a general Protection of Heaven, but have the Solemn Promiſe of the Son of God, the Eternal Truth, that they ſhall be Taught all Truth by the Spirit of God himſelf. And is not this a Comfort to all Believers, that while God exacts from them a Faith of ſuch Myſteries, as are above their Reaſon, he leaves them not to the Uncertainty of their own Judgments; but requires their Submiſſion to thoſe, who are under the immediate Guidance of the Holy Ghoſt, and cannot be queſtion'd, in

in what they teach, but by calling in queſtion the Authority and Truth of God himſelf? For what better Security can Man deſire, for the Truth of what he is to believe, than the Truth of God? God ſays, he will teach his Apoſtles, and theſe are to teach the World: And is not then every Believer taught by God, when he is taught by thoſe, whom God teaches? Is not his Faith built on God, and on his Truth? And is it not thus verified to the Letter, what Chriſt ſaid to his Apoſtles; Go and teach all Nations; he that hears you, hears me; and he that deſpiſes you, deſpiſes me; and he that deſpiſes me, deſpiſes him that ſent me? Thus in the Foundation of the Catholick Church, the Belief of this one Article, *I believe in Jeſus Chriſt his only Son our Lord*, uſher'd in all the reſt, whatever was taught by the Apoſtles: For believing Chriſt to be God, there was a neceſſity of giving Credit to his Promiſes, and of believing the Apoſtles in what they taught, whom he promis'd ſhould teach the Truth. And none could except againſt their Doctrine, but with violence to that Article of their Creed, ſince the queſtioning his Truth, involves a disbelief of his being God.

In this manner then was the World taught to be Chriſtian; and had it been our Lot to have faln in thoſe Days, thus

ſhould

ſhould we have believ'd, and thus would our Faith have been ſecur'd againſt all Doubt. And was not this ſame Method to continue to the end of the World? Thus Chriſt ſeems to teach, in Commanding all to here his Church, in requiring all to believe it; in promiſing, that his Holy Spirit ſhould abide with his Apoſtles to the end of the World, and lead them into all Truth, and that the Gates of Hell ſhould not prevail againſt it. And who then can change this Method? Who can lay any other Foundation, beſides that, which Chriſt has laid? Men may raiſe difficulties; but if they perſwade their Hearers to diſtruſt in Chriſt's Promiſes, and in his Church thus Eſtabliſh'd, and to depend on the ſtrength of their own Reaſoning; or of others like themſelves, in the Expoſition of Holy Scripture; and by ſuch uncertain Expoſitions to Regulate their Faith, and Oppoſe the Church, in what ſhe teaches; is not this changing the Method and Ordinance of Chriſt, and bringing down Faith from the Security of God's Spirit, to the Weakneſs of Humane Judgment, and to forſake God for Man?

Is not this Method of Believing, ſo unlike the Firſt Inſtitution, enough to bring it into queſtion? The Church now has been drawn down thro' the Series of many Ages, from its firſt Foundation by the Apoſtles,

poſtles, to our Days, and is to continue to the End of the World; not a different, but the ſame Church, in all Ages; where-ever it is, it muſt the ſame now, as it was in the beginning. Let all then compare their Preſent Church with that of the Apoſtles, and, as they compare other things, put both ends together. In the Firſt Inſtitution of the Church, the Spirit of God was ordain'd Guide of its Paſtors, to lead them into all Truth; the People were commanded to believe them, under Pain of Damnation; and in believing their Paſtors, thus aſſiſted, had their Faith reſting on the Divine Truth. Where the Method of Believing is the ſame now, there is ground enough of Comfort, whilſt putting both ends together, there appears an Agreement of the Preſent Age with the Firſt Inſtitution. But if, upon making this Compariſon, there is now no acknowleg'd Aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt in the Paſtors (ſuch as Chriſt promis'd) to lead and ſecure them in the Truth; if the People have no Obligation of believing them, but are at the liberty of their own Judgements, to believe or diſſent, as ſhall ſeem agreeable to their Private Reaſon; let this Method of believing, in this Preſent Age, be compar'd with the Firſt Age of it, when the Apoſtles inſtructed the World in Chriſtianity, according to Chriſt's Inſtitution,

ſtitution, as it ſtands Recorded in Holy Scripture; and if they agree, there is no reaſon, on this head, to queſtion it; but if it be wholly different, who can reſt ſatisfied, in its being the ſame Church, which Chriſt founded, and was planted by the Apoſtles throughout the World? The Church is the Congregation of the Faithful, or the Flock united in Faith; if the Church now has not the ſame Security in Truth, which was given to it in the Apoſtles, with the promiſe of its Continuance to the End of the World, it cannot be the Church founded by the Apoſtles, but ſome other different from it: If the Faith of the Flock be not now founded on the ſame divine Authority reſiding in its Paſtors, as it was in the Apoſtles time, but it is left to the uncertain Deciſions or Expoſitions, either of Paſtors or People, it cannot be that Divine Faith, in which the Flock was united in the Firſt Inſtitution of the Church. And who then can build their Salvation on it, ſince that only being of Chriſt's Appointment, this is not of Chriſt, but a Human Inſtitution brought in upon what he did, and therefore is neither the Church nor Faith of Chriſt, or his Apoſtles; and how then can it be to Salvation?

But what neceſſity was there of ſending the Holy Ghoſt upon the Apoſtles to teach

teach them? Had not Christ himself taught them? 'Tis true; but how little did they understand of what he taught? How imperfect yet was their Faith? How weak were they, as to the Profession of what they understood and believ'd? The Holy Ghost therefore was sent, to perfect what Christ had begun; by enlightning their Understanding, by suggesting to them, what Christ had taught, by confirming their Faith, by strengthning them, so as to stand unmov'd against all the Terrors of Cruelty and Death. All this was necessary, that they might be enabled to satisfie that great Charge, Christ had recommeuded to them. And hence may all Christians learn, how much it is their Intereſt, to open their Hearts, for the reception of this Holy Spirit, since without his help, all other Gifts may be fruitless in them, How often do Christians know, without making any reflection upon what they know, and so lose all the Advantage of it? How often do they believe, and yet are so weak in Faith, that it has no influence on the Government of their Lives? How often do they Read and Hear, and yet are insensible of the most Important Truths? How often are they sensible of the Truth, and yet let it all be smother'd by the force of Intereſt, or other Human Respects?

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If this be our Common Misery in this Mortal State, have not we all Reason enough to prepare our Hearts, and sollicite Heaven this Day, for receiving the Holy Ghost, that, by his Powerful Influence, we may be secur'd against the Dangers of our own Weakness? That by his Light our Understandings may be open'd by his Flames the Fire of Divine Love may be kindled in our Breasts, by his new Life our Hearts may be strengthen'd, so as to be proof against all Attempts; and let no Consideration take place of Duty. These happy Effects of the Holy Spirit we want every Day of our Lives, and 'tis for want of these, we take so many false steps, as if we had neither Faith nor Reason to direct us. Come then, O Holy Spirit, and take Possession of our Hearts; quicken us with a new Life, such as may make us Vigorous in all Obligations of our State, and put us wholly under the Conduct of Faith. Remove all Obstinacy from such as call themselves Christians, and make them sensible, how they Affront Infinite Wisdom and Goodness, when they distrust of thee. Where can we depend, if we suppose, thou hast fail'd us.

Monday

Monday *in* Whitſun-Week.

GOSPEL,

John C. 3. V. 16. ends V. 21.

EVery one, *who does ill, hates the Light and comes not to the Light, that his Works may not be reprov'd.* True Chriſtians are the Children of Light, the Diſciples of Truth; and being ſenſible, how great a Misfortune that Darkneſs is to them, in which they are Born, which is encreas'd by Sin, and by every immoderate Paſſion, and by too great Commerce with the World, are therefore Induſtrious in all thoſe Ways, by which God is pleas'd to Communicate to them the Light of Heaven, and bring them to the Knowledge of themſelves, and of the World, and of Him. For this end, they are diligent in Prayer, becauſe this opens their Hearts to God; they are conſtant in Reading the Goſpel, and all other Books of Inſtruction, becauſe by this means Chriſt and his Spirit is manifeſted to them; they are accuſtom'd to Recollection, becauſe thus they enter more ſeriouſly into themſelves, and by withdrawing at ſome diſtance from the World, are in the beſt Circumſtances of ſeeing and making the trueſt Judgment of it; they Conſult Directors

rectors, because by such Conferences they more easily discover both the Subtilties of Pride and Self-love, and the Snares of all their Enemies; they are watchful against all manner of Sollicitude, and Jealous of all Pleasing and Afflicting Passions, because these are like dark Clouds upon the Soul, which smother good Motions, and hinder it from discerning the Ways of Truth; they are easy in admitting the Advice or Reproof of Friends, because these often observe what Custom and Partial Self love permit them not to see in themselves; nay, the Reproaches of Enemies are welcome, because these having nothing of that Tenderness, which is a check upon Friends, speak freely those Truths, which others conceal: But above all, they are importune with Heaven, for sending into their Hearts, that Holy Spirit, which came at this time upon the Apostles, that by the direction of his Divine Light, they may discern every where the Ways and Will of God, and learn to distinguish betwixt Inclination, Custom, Education, Example and Duty.

Here is their great dependance, because they know, all other helps will be fruitless in them, if this Divine Mover undertakes not to be their Guide; therefore they pray, not only now, but every Day, that his Light may ever accompany them

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in all they do, and prevent all thoſe Deluſions, to which they are always expos'd, thro' the many preſſing Evils, that are within and about them.

This is the conſtant Method of Good Chriſtians; their Hopes ſpur them on to come to the Poſſeſſion of Light Eternal; and knowing there's no poſſibility of effecting it, but by the Communication of the ſame Light, diffuſing it ſelf into the Hearts of the Faithful; therefore in this is center'd their Deſires, Prayers, Labours, that they may happily at length paſs thro' the difficult, dangerous, dark and confus'd Ways of this Pilgrimage, and arrive ſafe at that End, which, concluding their Troubles, will be the beginning of that State of Perfect Light, which knows no Darkneſs.

The way of ſinful Chriſtians is contrary to this; their great Misfortune is not ſo much in being Sinners, as in hating that Light, which ſhews them their Unhappineſs, and the Means of being deliver'd, from it. By theſe degrees their Blindneſs grows upon them: Their Paſſion firſt makes them give the Darkneſs of Sin, preference to the Light of Juſtice and Truth: The love of Sin renders Truth diſagreeable; and their accompliſhment in Evil, is to keep at a diſtance from it, to ſuppreſs, ſtifle and perſecute it, as their danger

danger, and as likely to prove injurious to them.

There are few, it may be, that by a positive act, express their hatred of Light or Truth; but they are many, who, in the Method they take, betray this Aversion. For when Christians are so far engag'd in any Disorder, that they are unwilling to read what is for their Instruction, are afraid of seeing those Persons, whom they know Zealous for reclaiming them; cannot bear a reproof, but with Expressions of dislike against such, as attempt this Charity; when they grow fond of such Books, Entertainments, and Company, as they know suitable to their own perverse Ways; and if they keep up yet a Form of Religion, seek out such for the pretended Government of their Conscience, as, being either altogether Strangers, cannot suspect the depth of their Iniquity; or being Weak or Unexperienc'd, are likely to be favourable, upon the supposition of their sincerity; when they are come, I say, to this State, do not they, in all these several Ways, shew their Aversion to Light and Truth, by purposely declining all those Helps, by which these can possibly touch upon them? 'Tis but too Evident, and their Condition must be here set down as most deplorable, even as that, which is mark'd by Christ with the worst of Characters. If

If this be ſo, muſt not all thoſe Chriſtians hence take the Alarm, who tho' not blinded by Vice, yet over rul'd by a prevailing Sloth or Indifferency of Mind, have no ſort of Sollicitude for coming to a Senſe of their Duty, will take no pains in Reading, Praying, or conſulting about the Affairs of their Souls, but letting all go on by hazard, are not concern'd in making Proviſion for their Eternal State? If theſe hate not the Light, can they ſay, they love it? If they lov'd it, would not they endeavour to approach to it, that what is good in them, might be approv'd, what is evil, be condemn'd, and what is defective, be perfected? Thoſe, who ſeek God, and deſire to do nothing, but in his Spirit, never think they can know too much of his Law, and of the Sanctity of his Ways: And where there is little or none of this Induſtry, can ſuch Chriſtians perſwade themſelves, that they ſeek God? They ſeek him not, at leaſt, as they ought to do; they ſeek him not as their Eternal Good, and how then will they ever find him ſo? O God, how much reaſon have we to deplore their Blindneſs, who, living engag'd in Sin, love Darkneſs more than Light; and for the preſent ſatisfaction of their Paſſions, renounce thee, and in thee, all hopes of Happineſs! How

much

much reason have we to lament our general Injustice, in being bent with so much earnestness on the things of this World, and so slothful in seeking thee! Remedy these Evils, we beseech thee, by taking from Sinners the Love of their Darkness, and inspiring them with a desire of Light. Pour forth thy Holy Spirit into the Hearts of all thy Faithful, that being quicken'd with this Heavenly Fire, they may be more Zealous in the observance of thy Law, and learn to raise up their Desires above the Things of this World, and proportion these Desires to the Value of that Happiness, which is the Object of their Hopes.

Tuesday *in* Whitsun-Week.

GOSPEL,

John C. 10. V. 1. ends. V. 10.

I *Am the Door; if any one enters by me, he shall be sav'd.* In this Gospel Christ gives the Character of Good and Evil Pastors, and 'tis made choice of at this time by the Church, to excite the Faithful to Pray for all those, who, in this Solemnity, are admitted to Holy Orders. For it being here positively declar'd, that such as are unduly Presented, are not Pastors, but Thieves and Murtherers, even the Murtherers

therers of Souls, has not the Flock reaſon to Addreſs themſelves to God, in the Fervour of Prayer and Penance, for preventing this Miſchief? 'Tis upon the Apprehenſion of this Danger, the Church Ordains the Faithful, at this time, to join in Faſting and Prayer, for the obtaining of God Good Shepherds, and to defend them from ſuch, who, under the Shepherds Habit, will prove no better than Wolves. Thoſe only are Good, who enter by Chriſt, who is the Door, into the Fold, that is, who are call'd by the Spirit of God, upon Motives, which regard his Glory, which bind them to the good of the Church, to the Salvation of Souls, which oblige them to do the Will of God, and to make a Sacrifice of themſelves to his Service, and of the leaſt of his Flock. Secondly, Who labour in the Inſtruction of thoſe under their Charge, and make them hear their Voice. Thirdly, Who take Care to know their Sheep, to know their Diſpoſitions and Neceſſities, to ſtudy the Will of God in their Regard, to viſit them in their Wants, and be ever ready to aſſiſt them in particular. Fourthly, Who are watchful over their own Flock, without affecting to raiſe a Confidence in them, with whom they are not Charg'd. Fifthly, Who are laborious in drawing Souls from Sin, from their evil Habits, from the Corrup-

tions of the World, and Pomps of the Devil, and to lead them in the Ways of the Gospel. Sixthly, Who not only teach them this Way, but stand at the head of their Flock, doing what they teach, and giving Life to their Doctrine by Example.

These are some Marks of Good Shepherds expressly mention'd by Christ himself in this Gospel: Where-ever they are found, there is reason to hope, such have enter'd by Christ, and are in the way to his Promises. But when Ambition and Interest, the Desire of Ease, the Conveniencies of Life, the Advancing a Family, &c. are the Motives, that carry to the Temple, what way can they find into it, but that of Robbers; since this is not to enter by Jesus Christ, but by the World, and with hopes of finding the World in it? And where-ever such Dispositions appear, as the love of Ease, a grasping after the World, a fondness of its Ways and Liberties, who cannot but fear, that such, having not the Spirit of Christ, are no Shepherds of his Flock, but rather Murtherers of it, in the neglect of Souls, and the ill Example given, in teaching them to be more in love with the World than with God.

If these Characters are some direction for Pastors, they are likewise for the Flock. The Christian, that enters not by Jesus Christ

Chriſt, is none of his Fold. They, who upon Motives of Temporal Intereſt, embrace his Faith, enter not by Jeſus Chriſt. They, who, profeſſing it, let Cuſtom, or the Deſire of being eſteem'd Pious, put them upon the Practice of Religious Duties, ſeek not entrance by Jeſus Chriſt. They, who depend with ſuch Exceſs of Confidence on ſome Directors, as to think Virtue to be inſeperable from their direction, ſeek not entrance by Jeſus Chriſt. They, who ſo depend on the recital of ſome particular Prayers, or wearing a Habit, as to have Aſſurance of Salvation on this account, without any Concern of Reforming the Diſorders of their Lives, ſeek not entrance by Jeſus Chriſt. They, who place their Confidence of Salvation, or of the Means of obtaining it on any thing Created, whether on Earth, or in Heaven, ſo as to take them from their Dependance on Jeſus Chriſt, and the Virtue of his Paſſion, ſeek not entrance by Jeſus Chriſt.

The reaſon of all, is, becauſe Jeſus Chriſt is the Door, by which all muſt enter; none can be Sav'd, but by him; he is the Door both of Grace and Glory, of Salvation, and of all the Means of obtaining it. All Good is in him, and muſt come to us by him: All Good is in him, as in a Treaſure, and muſt come to us by

the Virtue of his Merits, because his Blood is the Price of our Sin, and nothing can prevail with God, but as united with his Passion. Nothing then can be done in order to Salvation, but with an entire dependance on the Divine Grace, to be obtain'd by us thro' the Merits of Christ; the most Religious Duties, without this dependance, must be fruitless; and seeking Heaven any other way, which is not by Christ, will never find it, because 'tis not entring by him.

And this being the first Principle of Christianity, what must be thought of all those Christians, who seem to live in hopes of Heaven, and yet are little Sollicitous to live according to those Rules, which Christ has given us; who despising the Humility of the Gospel, have no Comfort, but in the Pomps of the Devil, and the World; who neglecting the Ways of Penance, study nothing but Ease and Inclination; who not valuing the Spirit of Charity and Peace, live in continual Dissentions; who being blind to the Duties of Justice, see nothing but their present Interest, and advance this by the constant practice of Frauds and Oppression; who not regarding the Moderation prescrib'd, give themselves up to a Universal Prodigality, Gluttony and Intemperance; who not being watchful over their Passions, Sacrifice

crifice Life and Eſtate in their Support: who paſſing by the Narrow Way, open their Souls to all the unwarrantable Diſpenſations of a Corrupt World and Cuſtom, and inſtead of ſeeking, before all things, the Kingdom of God, and its Juſtice, are bent with eagerneſs on every thing elſe, and put this to the hazard of a ſlothful and idle Life: This is the Torrent, in which are carried the greateſt part of the Chriſtian World, and yet all live in hopes of Heaven? And by whom are they to enter? Can they expect to enter by Chriſt, when they forſake the Ways of Chriſt? Can their Confidence be in him, when they have ſo little regard to what he preſcribes, that their whole Lives are a Contradiction to his Goſpel? 'Tis but too evident then, whatever hopes they have, they are not hopes in him; and, if by him all are to enter, who are to be Sav'd, what will their Salvation be, who ſeek not to enter by him?

O God, how afflicting is this proſpect of a believing, and yet unhappy World, which having Heaven before them, and pretending to go to it, are not Sollicitous to enter by him, whom they know to be the Door; but purſuing on their own evil Ways, carry on their Hopes, even while they act againſt him, who is the only ground of all Hope! O God, behold, I

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enter here a Proteſtation againſt this fatal Abſurdity, and beſeech thee ſo to direct me by thy Grace, that I may put my whole Confidence in Chriſt, and the Merits of his Paſſion, and have no dependance, but what centers in him. And while I truſt in him, O God, let my Life be directed by him.

Trinity-Sunday.

Firſt after Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL,

Luke C. 6. V. 36. ends V. 42.

BE *you Merciful, as your Father is Merciful.* Man in this ſtate of Redemption is the Work of Gods Mercy, and the Chriſtian ought to bear his Image in the imitation of this Divine Perfection. God is full of Mercy towards us, and 'tis our Duty to be full of Mercy towards our Brethren, for the Love of God, ſo to expreſs the Gratitude we Owe him.

Such as deſire to ſatisfie this Duty will find in this Goſpel Four Ways, in which they are directed, for the Excerciſe of this Mercy: The Firſt is that of not judging others; and this God has made ſo much their Intereſt, that he declares, this Mercy in not judging others, ſhall be the

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Rule of the Divine Mercy towards them; that if they judge not, they ſhall not be judg'd. Not that God condemns here Juſt Judgments, but only ſuch as are Raſh and Unjuſt; for there being nothing of Injuſtice in judging according to Truth, which is evident, this is not forbid; but there being always Injuſtice or Raſhneſs, in paſſing a Judgment without Certainty or Evidence of Truth, it is not according to the Rule of the Divine Mercy, and therefore the Practice cannot be, without drawing the Severity of God's Judgments on their own Heads. This then is to be avoided, and for more exactneſs, we may here frame ſome Rules, ſuch as Obſervation will teach us, from what others do in regard of our ſelves, which ever meeting with our Reſentments, may ſerve to direct us, in regard of our Neighbour. See then ſome of theſe Rules.

Firſt, 'Tis unreaſonable and unjuſt to fix on any Perſon an Injurious Name, ſuch as ſignifies a habit in Vice, for ſome paſſing Fault, he has committed. A Man is not Imprudent for one Indiſcretion, but often more prudent, from the Experience of ſuch an Overſight.

Secondly, When there are ſeveral Motives, upon which an Action may be done, 'tis unjuſt to charge it upon the worſt:

As to lay that to Hatred or Paſſion, which may have been done by Inadvertency, Perſwaſion or Conſcience.

Thirdly, 'Tis unjuſt to charge all like Actions on the ſame Intention, when they may have different; for ſome may be done upon Deſign, and others without Reflection.

Fourthly, 'Tis unjuſt to ſupply by our own Imagination, what we do not ſee in an Action, of which we undertake to judge; that is, to judge beyond what we ſee; for tho' it be not forbid to ſee, yet 'tis forbid to judge farther than we ſee; becauſe this is judging without evidence, which is always unreaſonable.

Fifthly, 'Tis unjuſt to ſuppoſe a Fault as Incorrigible, when there has not been due Care us'd for remedying it.

Sixthly, 'Tis unjuſt to fix or ſuppoſe a Fault in any, upon the Report of Perſons, whoſe Credit is not ſufficient for grounding ſuch a Judgment; as all thoſe are, who are Over-credulous, Inſincere, Melancholy, Light, or ſubject to Paſſion.

Seventhly. 'Tis unjuſt to give always the Preference to ſuch Perſons, who are moſt in our Favour, and to let the Inclination they have towards us, be the Rule both of our Eſteem and Judgment: So as to repute their Faults inconſiderable, who love

love us, and all theirs insupportable, whom we suppose disaffected towards us.

These Maxims may give some light in this Affair, for preventing our being injurious to our Neighbour, and much more so to our own Souls, by provoking heavier Judgments upon our selves. This is Motive enough; tho' others still will be discover'd by those, who observe, that Rash Judgments are the ordinary Cause of Aversion, Hatred, Detraction, and infinite other ill Effects. The greatest Dissentions proceed often from no other Root, whilst thus influencing both Words and Actions, betray interior Prejudices, and open a Breach. And if once they are made publick, how do they multiply; their being but very few, who will take the Pains to examine into the Truth of what they hear? The generality of the World is easie in reporting from those, who have judg'd rashly of their Neighbour, because in this they gratify their own Natural Corruption, and justify at the same time the Evil they do; because the Judgment is not their own, but fram'd by another; not reflecting, that if another is to be accountable for framing it, they are to answer for believing and reporting it.

The Second Way of practising this Mercy, is in not condemning others; and the Promise annex'd is sufficient Encourage-

ment; *Condemn not, and thou ſhalt not be Condemn'd.* The thing requir'd, is, not to Condemn with rigour thoſe Faults in others, which are certain and viſible, nor to exaggerate or publiſh them; but rather to diminiſh, hide and excuſe them, as far as may be, without prejudice to Truth and Juſtice. All are ſenſible of their own Infirmities, of the powerful Aſſaults made againſt them; and all ſhould know, how great is their Misfortune, who are overcome; theſe are ſo many heads, upon which Compaſſion is due to ſuch as are in Sin; and who is there that thinks he ſtands, has not reaſon to fear his own Fall, and to ſee in others his own Caſe, were it not a Mercy undue to him, that is his Support? 'Tis a Cruelty then to exaggerate their Misfortunes, who are already too Miſerable; and is it not the Blindneſs even of Deſpair, for Chriſtians to expoſe themſelves to the rigour of Divine Vengeance, rather than have an Indulgent Tenderneſs for their Brethren under Sin.

The Third Way, is in pardoning Injuries, done againſt them; *Forgive, and you ſhall be forgiven.* Encouragement enough, in having this Mercy made ſo much our own Intereſt, And what is it, that Man has to forgive, in Compariſon of thoſe Sins, which he himſelf has committed againſt God? Our greateſt Complaints have often more

more of our own Imagination, than reality in them; they are many times the Effects of Indiſcretion, rather than of Malice; and if they are real Evils, can we ſay, we have not brought them upon our ſelves, by our own Sins, whilſt God makes others the Inſtruments of his Juſtice? Can we ſay, ſuch Perſons are more injurious to us, than we are to our ſelves, ſince the miſchief from their Hands is nothing, if compar'd to that we do our own Souls, by uncharitable Reſentments, by Paſſion and Revenge? And yet if, upon forgiving theſe, we have an Aſſurance of being forgiven by God, as to all our paſt Crimes, and the Eternal Puniſhment, that is due, can we ſay, we have Faith; can we ſay, we have Reaſon, if we do not accept of this Compendious Way of clearing the immenſe Debts, under which we lie?

The Fourth Way, is that of Giving: *Give, and it ſhall be given to you.* Chriſtians are to give or lend to their Neighbour in his Wants; and is it not Encouragement enough to this Charity, that Truth it ſelf offers to be Security for the payment of what is thus given; But then, it muſt not be for Vanity, Human Generoſity or Intereſt, but God muſt be the Motive of what is given, if it be expected, that he ſhall take it in Account. And is it not here the Effect of Infinite Goodneſs, that what

what God could have commanded from us, upon the Title of his Soveraign Power over our Persons and Goods, he is pleas'd to Invite us to do, upon the hopes of Recompence? But since he has promis'd it, it is not Covetousness, but Piety, to hope and wait for what he stands engag'd. And who are they now, that have any Sense of their own Wants, both Temporal and Spiritual, and how necessary a dependance there is for the relief of these, from the Hand of God, will not readily accept of these obvious and easie means for opening God's Hands upon them?

O God, we must here confess it an Effect of thy Infinite Mercy, that thou hast thus strictly join'd our Duty, and our Interest, and put our Eternal Lot into our own Hands; so that what we most dread, and what we ought most to hope for, is now left to our own Management. And are not the Terms very easie, when by not judging others, we may escape thy Judgments, when by shewing Mercy to others, we may find Mercy, when by forgiving others, we may be forgiven, and by helping others, we may obtain thy help? 'Tis thy Mercy, O God, to make our Salvation thus easy to us; what then must our Sin and Blindness be, if we accept not of the Conditions thou hast offer'd?

Corpus

Corpus-Chriſti-*Day.*

GOSPEL,

John C. 6. V. 56. ends V. 59.

MY Fleſh is meat indeed, and my Blood is drink indeed: He that eats my Fleſh, and drinks my Blood, abides in me, and I in him. This Feſtival is appointed as a grateful Memorial of that Day, when Chriſt Inſtituted the Bleſſed Eucharift, and left us his own Sacred Body and Blood, under the Forms of Bread and Wine, for the Food and Nouriſhment of our Souls. The Myſtery is great, and being more proportion'd to the Infinite Power and Goodneſs of God, than to our Reaſon, meets here with Exceptions, as if God were not to be credited, in ſuch Works, where Reaſon comprehends not the *Manner*, in which they are done. But is not the Doubting Chriſtian here much overſeen, in not reflecting, that Faith is the Reaſon of a Believer, and that 'tis as much unreaſonable to queſtion what God ſays, becauſe Reaſon does not comprehend it, as 'tis to believe Man, when he teaches contrary to what we ſee and know. What plainer and more poſitive words could Chriſt have us'd for expreſſing this Truth, of giving us his Fleſh to eat, and his Blood to drink?

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It was in this Sense the Jews question'd what he said, and their Exception is a confirmation of the Truth deliver'd. And now there can be no other Exception against it, but theirs, that is, the difficulty of believing what Christ says; as if the difficulty, of a Mystery could dispence with a Christian's Faith, and the hardness of the Saying were reason enough for him to give it some other Turn, so to render it more suitable to his own Apprehension.

But why should the Exception be made here? All Christians read of the Rivers of *Egypt* being turn'd into Blood, and they believe it; of the Dust turn'd into Lice, and they believe it; of *Lot's* Wife turn'd into a Pillar of Salt; and they believe it; of the Water turn'd into Wine at the Marriage of *Cana* of *Galilee*, and they believe it; and why not then, that the Bread and Wine is here chang'd into the Body and Blood of Christ, when Christ himself, after his Blessing, so positively declares, This is my Body, This is my Blood? They who believe God to be Almighty, cannot question, but that Power, which made all things of nothing, can change one thing into another. The Devil believ'd it, when he said, *If thou be the Son of God, command, that these Stones be made Bread*: How then can a Christian call it into doubt, when he confesses him, that says it, to be Infinite in Power and Truth? 'Tis

'Tis true, he cannot discover it to be what Christ says, with his Eyes, nor with his Taste; but he hears it from Christ, and is not this the Sense, by which Faith comes to the Soul? *Faith comes by Hearing*. And having heard it from Christ, is not his Authority and Truth sufficient for his believing, altho' his Eyes concur not with their Evidence? What need of other Evidence, when Christ has said it? Were Christ present in the Eucharist in a visible manner, there would be then reason to consult the Eyes; but his Presence being Ineffable, and in a Spiritual manner of being, to consult them here would be to ask their Advice, upon what is Invisible, and falls not within their Sphere. When the Holy Ghost descended in form of a Dove, and the Angels appear'd at the Sepulcher as young Men, was there any Information of the Eyes to attest the Presence of those Spiritual Beings under those Forms? No, but there is a Divine Authority, that asserts it, and upon this it is believ'd. If then Christ be here present, and yet not in a Corporeal or Visible Manner, the Authority of Christ declaring it, is all the Ground, that Faith requires; and to ask the Eyes, in this Case, is neither the Part of Philosopher or Divine.

Faith then teaches, that Christ is really present in the Eucharist; and why? That thus

thus he may communicate himself to the Faithful, that he may abide in them, and they in him, and even so as to live by him. We have a Life of Corruption, which we receive from *Adam*, and those, who live according to it, live in Corruption, there is another Life; which is that of Christ, and those, who live according to it, live in Holiness; Christ himself is the Principle of this Life; for this end is he present in the Eucharist, that being receiv'd by the Faithful, he may be to them the beginning of this Life. Here then may Christians see, what Thanks are due to their Redeemer on this account; and likewise, what they are to propose to themselves, as often as they go to the Holy Communion. The Sense of their Sins ought to raise in them a detestation of their past Life, this detestation is to be follow'd with earnest desires of a new Life; and Christ being the Beginning of this new Life, how Sollicitous ought they to be to partake of him, that by his Powerful Presence, they may be strengthen'd against all the Dangers of their Corruption, and have such a Foundation laid of a better Life, so as to hope to live by him?

This is the Design of the Divine Goodness in the Institution, and ought to be propos'd by the Faithful, as the End of their approaching to this Table of our Lord

Lord. Whence it is eaſie to diſcover their Fault, who have little deſire, and therefore come ſeldom to partake of this Holy Food; there being too much reaſon to fear, that ſuch have no ſincere Diſlike of their Weakneſs and Corruption, who have ſo little Concern in making uſe of the Remedies, which the Divine Mercy has appointed for their help: Their Fault likewiſe, who in approaching to it, make little Preparation, but come on certain Days, as it were by Cuſtom; for how does this kind of Indifferency anſwer either the Goodneſs of God, or their own Wants? How can they expect the Fruit of Life, when they come without Life to it, but rather ſo, as ſcarce to have a Senſe of what they do? Laſtly, their Fault, who making a tolerable Preparation, think only of receiving ſome paſſing Holineſs, but not of making their Souls an Abode for Chriſt, or of Living by him; and therefore as ſoon as they have receiv'd, allowing only for a ſhort Recollection, they preſently forſake him, returning into the Method of their uſual Diſſipation and Weakneſs. In this, forgetting the Principal End for which Chriſt ordain'd this Sacrament, which being to eſtabliſh his Abode in the Souls of the Faithful, and to Communicate his Life to them, they cannot but be ſenſible, that by hindring this

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Effect; and rejecting his Spirit, while they receive his Body, they pervert the Order of Grace, make void the design'd Mercy, and are ungrateful to the Infinite Goodness of their Redeemer.

What therefore are Christians to do for preventing this Evil? They are to be mindful, that the End of receiving Christ is not only to receive a Passing Grace, such as may sanctifie them for the present, but so to receive Christ, that he may abide in them, and be the Principle of a new Life; and therefore after Receiving, their Obligation is, and their Endeavours must be answerable, to live by the Spirit of Christ, so that all their Thoughts, Affections, Desires and Actions be influenc'd and govern'd, not by their wonted Corruption, which is the Life of *Adam*, but by Christ's Spirit; and this it is, for Christ to live in them, and they in him. What Care then must there be, to suppress all evil Passions, to renounce the Ways of Sin, of Sensuality, Pride, Injustice and Sloth, to follow the Ways of Charity and Peace, to practice Humility and Patience, to do the Will of God in all things, and seek his Glory? This is putting on the New Man, 'tis the Life of Christ, and such a Union with him; is the way of being eternally united with him in Glory. Grant, O God, that with this Disposition

I may always approach to thy Table, that in receiving the Bread of Life, I may live by it. O Chriſt, the Living Bread, make me live by thee: Bread of Heaven, thus conduct me thro' this Life of Miſery to reſt in thee: Bread Eternal, quicken my Soul with the true Deſire of Eternity, till I come to the unchangeable Poſſeſſion of thee.

Sunday *within the* Octave *of* Corpus Chriſti.

Second after Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL,

Luke C. 14. V. 16. ends V. 24.

ALL began to excuſe themſelves. The Subject of this Goſpel is the Parable of thoſe, who were invited to a great Supper, and all deſiring to be excus'd. Now tho' it is not ſtrange, that Perſons taken up with Buſineſs ſhould not Anſwer the Expectation of their Friend, who has Invited them to a Banquet, and there can be no reaſonable Exception againſt the Excuſe they ſend; yet when we conſider, what is here ſignified by this Supper; that it is the Happineſs of Heaven, the Eternal Banquet of God's Elect, out of which there is nothing, but Miſery and De-

Deſpair: here preſently appears the unreaſonnbleneſs of all Excuſes, becauſe this is a Point, that will admit of none; and the Juſtice of that Sentence is very obvious, which excludes all from this Table of Glory, who find Reaſons, for not anſwering the Invitation of his Goodneſs, who calls them to it.

The Inſtruction then of this Goſpel, not a forc'd Explication, but directly deſign'd by Jeſus Chriſt, is, That God having prepar'd, in the next Life, Eternal Happineſs, and invited all to enter into thoſe Joys, all are bound, while in this World, to prepare themſelves for partaking of this Mercy, and that whoever neglects to make this Preparation, muſt unavoidably fall under the Sentence of a perpetual Excluſion. Whence the Heart of every Chriſtian muſt be ſtrongly poſſeſs'd with this Principle; That his greateſt Buſineſs is that of Salvation; that no other ought to take place of it; and that to give the preference to any other, is Criminal.

To eſtabliſh the Truth of this Principle, Chriſt was pleas'd to make choice of ſuch Inſtances, for ſuppos'd Excuſes, as are, in themſelves, things both very Innocent and Lawful; ſuch are, To go See a Farm, to try Oxen, to Marry a Wife, or be Buſied in Family Concerns. No Buſineſs of this World can be more warrantable

ble than these, and yet Christ has declar'd it; That if a Christian, through his Immoderate Application to these, is negligent in making Provision for his Eternal State, that upon this, he shall be excluded; *Not one of those Men shall taste my Supper.*

It is not therefore enough for a Christian's Security, to consider the Lawfulness of his Profession, or, upon Examination, to discover no sort of Engagement, that is esteem'd sinful or unjust; for however this be a very Comfortable prospect, yet since he is bound to provide for his Eternal Well-being, if this be neglected, he cannot think himself in a safe Way; and whatever is the Occasion of such neglect, he must judge it in this respect unlawful. If then he has his Heart so full of any part of this World, that he lives forgetful of God, and taken off from all those Exercises, which are the necessary Means for bringing him to the Possession of Happiness, he must consider this as a State of Injustice towards God and his Soul, and is bound, either wholly to quit such Employments, which are the Occasion of it, or else learn to perform them in a Christian way, that is, with such Moderation of Spirit, that while he takes Care of this Life, he does not neglect the other.

This however ought not to give any disquiet to those, who, upon some accident,

dent, have their Thoughts ſo diſturb'd, that they are uncapable, for a time, of going on with their uſual Exerciſes, and hence ſeem wholly at a ſtand, as to Eternity; for in this Life, there can be no Security againſt ſurprizing Accidents, nor Priviledge from ſuch Interruptions; an induſtrious Spirit will ſoon recover it ſelf from this Weight or Diſſipation, and either by Humility, or new Vigour, make an Advantage of it. But the deſign of the Goſpel is to awaken thoſe, whoſe Life is a general Diſtraction, ſuch as gives them not leiſure to think of Heaven, or of God, but ſo poſſeſſes or overwhelms their Minds, that they ſeem to live, as if they had nó Concern beyond this World, or ſo at leaſt, as if the Buſineſs of Salvation was not worth, or needed not their Care. All theſe ought to feel ſome ſting of Conſcience, and not put it by, as a groundleſs Scruple; for certainly when the Concern of Eternity, which ought to have the firſt place, is put by; when the Soul is languiſhing under many Diſtempers, dark and dull as to all that belongs to Salvation, full of the World, and empty of God, and no Care is us'd, in theſe unhappy Circumſtances, for bringing it to a ſenſe of its Miſery, is it not time to take its ſtate into Conſideration, and not to go on under the flattery of groundleſs hopes,

hopes, when so positive a Sentence of Damnation is pronounc'd against this Blindness?

If this be reasonable, then let all those, with a jealous Eye, take a review of themselves, who are under any of the Circumstances mark'd out by the Gospel: First, Those, who have bought a Farm, and must go to see it; those subject to Idleness, Divertisements, Pleasures, Prodigality, and the Pride of Riches. Secondly, Those, who have bought Oxen, and must go to try them, by which is signified the danger of all manner of Curiosity, whether of Sense or Spirit, all manner of Labours, Employments, and Temporal Affairs, which overwhelm the Mind. Thirdly, Those, who Marry, that is, such as are engag'd in such Bonds, either to Family or Concupiscence, that the Spirit is rather a Slave than Free. All these have reason to call themselves to account; for tho' the face of things, upon a general view, may appear Innocent; yet since all these Engagements are too apt to possess the Soul, and divert it from giving due Attention to the greater Business of Eternity, both in the Service of God, and in the Care, that is absolutely necessary for the Well-being of the Soul, amidst so many Infirmities and Distempers, to which it is subject, and Dangers, with which it is encompass'd

compass'd; these are oblig'd to look well into themselves, and see all be manag'd with that Christian Prudence, that if they are happily free from all kinds of Vice, which can render them unworthy, they be not excluded from the Banquet by Neglect.

This was the Fate of the Persons mention'd, who being all such as had their Satisfactions here, and seem'd to think themselves well in this Life, and desirous of enjoying what they had, it is a sufficient hint of their Indisposition for hearing the Call and Direction of God, who are in the like Circumstances; and while we see such as these rejected as unworthy, and others remarkable only for their Misery, as the Poor, the Weak, the Blind, the Lame, made choice of to fill up their places, the Conclusion is very plain, tho' not a relishing one to Sense, nor easie to be comprehended, That 'tis a kind of Misfortune to be possess'd with any thing in this Life, which we esteem our Happiness: and, on the contrary, a kind of Happiness to be Miserable here; that is, to have nothing, which we admire or love: These being Persons sensible of their Poverty and Misery, and therefore in readiness to answer their Invitation to a Place of Plenty and Rest; whilst the others finding their Happiness here, are neither desirous nor

nor prepar'd for a Change: And therefore, if they labour not to diſengage their Hearts from what is preſent, againſt the time, when they ſhall be call'd to the Banquet, they will be for ever excluded, in Puniſhment of their Neglect and Notorious Ingratitude, in confining their Happineſs to the Bleſſings receiv'd, without Endeavours of loving or ſeeking the Giver.

O God, if this be the Condition of thy Gifts, that to reſt in them without ſeeking thee, will be our Eternal Unhappineſs, teach us a right uſe of whatever we receive, and eſtabliſh well this Principle in our Hearts; That our Happineſs is not in them, but in Thee; and that we are ſtill Unhappy, till we come to the Poſſeſſion of thee. Thus may we, all our Lives, have a Senſe of being Miſerable; and let this Senſe keep us ſo in expectation of a better Life, that whenever we are call'd, we may be found ready to embrace the Invitation, and be admitted Gueſts to the Banquet, thy Mercy has prepar'd.

Third Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL,

Luke C. 15. V. 1. ends. V. 10.

THere *ſhall be Joy in Heaven, upon one Sinner, that does Penance.* The whole

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Gospel is an Encouragement to Sinners, to depend on the Mercies of God, in hopes of Forgiveness. This Inclination to Mercy was so remarkable in Christ, that the *Pharisees* reproach him for conversing with Sinners; but their Ignorance or Malice is no Discouragement to his Goodness; he takes away their Scandal, by proposing to them a Parable of the Shepherd, leaving his Ninety nine Sheep in the Desart, and going to look for the one Sheep, that was lost, and having declar'd the Joy of its being found, thus concludes his Remonstrance; *So I say to you, there shall be Joy in Heaven, upon one Sinner, that does Penance.*

This Goodness of God is that, which ought to raise up the Hearts of all those Sinners, who, sensible of their unhappy state, desire the Favour of their offended God: For tho', when they consider the number and weight of their Crimes, their Ingratitude under the Infinite Blessings of Heaven, and their Injustice in preferring their own vile Inclinations, to the Commands and most Holy Will of God, they have hence reason to tremble under the apprehension of that Justice, which is due to their Wickedness; yet, turning on the other side, when they see God, tho' thus provok'd to punish, yet so full of Goodness, as not to will the Death of Sinners, but

but to deſire they ſhould be Converted and live; ſo full of Compaſſion, as to invite and call upon them to return; ſo Infinite in Mercy, as even to ſeek and follow them, thro' all their Diſorders, and offer to lead them back by the Arms of his Power and Goodneſs; what Sinner can here be at a ſtand within himſelf, and queſtion, whether God will receive his Repentance, and ſhew Mercy to him? A Sinner, blind and obſtinate in evil, may ſay, he will not return; but if he looks on God, and deſires to return, he cannot ſay, God will not receive him.

Let but ſuch Chriſtians caſt their Eyes on the Shepherd, who relenting the loſs of one Sheep gone aſtray, leaves the body of his Flock in the Deſart, to go in ſearch of the ſtray; let them conſider his Sollicitude and Labours, all bent upon this Enquiry, and having at length found him, laying him on his own Shoulders, ſo to carry him back, at his own Coſt, to the Fold. Here let them tell me; does this Shepherd deſire the return of his loſt Sheep? Why is he Sollicitous? Why does he ſeek? Why does he take him on his Shoulders? Why does he call his Friends to rejoice with him, upon his being found? Does not all this ſpeak his Deſire of recovering that which was loſt? From this Pa-

rable let all dejected Sinners now turn their Eyes upon God, and see if he be not much more desirous of their return. For was it not he, who compassionating the unhappy State of Man lost by Sin, sent his Only Son made Man, as the Good Shepherd, to look after the Sheep that was lost? And did not he seek him, who being God, Essentially Blessed in himself, independant of Man, yet subjected himself to all the Miseries of Human Life, and to the most rigorous Punishment of Sin, that he might find him? And can Sinners then be in suspence, whether he be willing to receive them? Let them look again upon this their Shepherd, and tell me, Why did he Converse with Sinners? Why did he Preach to them? Why did he Sigh, and Pray, and Fast, and Lament their Blindness? Why did he receive the most Notorious Offenders coming to him, and undertake to be their Advocate both before Men and God? Why did he submit himself to Reproach, and his Shoulders to Stripes and the Cross, taking upon him their iniquities, and offering to heal their Wounds by his own? Why does he here declare, that their Conversion is the Joy of Heaven? Is not all this a demonstration of the desire he has for the Salvation of all? Is not this a Call to Sinners to return? Is it not an Assurance if they

seek

ſeek Mercy, they ſhall find it; and that if they deſire Pardon of their Offences, God will meet their Wiſhes with Joy?

Why then ſhould the greateſt Sinners doubt of this Mercy? 'Tis true, the Horror of their Crimes muſt terrify; but can they ſay, their Sins are greater, than God is able or willing to forgive? What if Injuſtice has been their Crime, as in the Publican, what if Uncleanneſs, as in *Magdalen*; what if Murder, as in the Thief; what if Blaſphemy, as in *Saul*? what if Infidelity or Apoſtacy, as in *Peter*? Has not ſuch Sins been already forgiven? And were not theſe Sinners, upon their Converſion, embraced with a more particular love, and diſtinguiſh'd by moſt ſignal Favours of Heaven? And is God's Arm now ſhorten'd, or his Goodneſs leſſen'd, that others, upon their return, ſhould not find Mercy? No, God is Unchangeable, and his Mercies endure for ever: He ſtill calls upon Sinners, he invites them, and now Chriſt offers his Shoulders, that by virtue of his Paſſion and Death, their Sins may be cancel'd.

There can nothing therefore be wanting, but on their own part; if they have a true Abhorrence of their Crimes; if the ſenſe of having offended their God, raiſes ſuch a trouble in their Minds, that they have a diſlike of themſelves, and are con-

founded at the Thoughts of their paſt Ingratitude, Miſery and Blindneſs; if they fear nothing more, than the Effects of their known Weakneſs and Corruption; if they humble themſelves before God, begging pardon of all Offences, and, upon the Experience of their Miſery, Sollicite for the Succours of Divine Grace for their Eſtabliſhment in good; if they reſolve upon a new Life, and, upon theſe Reſolutions, ſeparate themſelves from the uſual Occaſions of Sin; if thus they come proſtrate before the Throne of Grace, as Chriſt has appointed, diſtruſting of themſelves, and depending wholly upon the Merits of their Redeemer, that Mercy cannot fail them, which they ſeek, God will embrace them, and Heaven will rejoice in their return.

This Aſſurance God has, at all times, given to the greateſt Criminals, and Chriſt has ſufficiently confirm'd it in all he has done and ſuffer'd; and now if the moſt Notorious of Sinners have this, whereon to build their hopes of Mercy, upon their ſincerely ſeeking it; ſo that for them to Deſpair, is the greateſt Affront to the Divine Goodneſs; how much ſtronger ought to be the Hope of other Chriſtians, who have never liv'd in the known practice of wilful Sin, have faln under no other Guilt, but of Overſight or

Surprize

ſurprize, and at preſent are Conſcious of nothing, but ſuch Infirmities, which are almoſt inſeparable from this State of Weakneſs? I do not pretend however to perſwade even theſe, that they have no reaſon to fear, or nothing to lament, or have nothing, which ought to be the juſt matter of a daily Repentance; for 'tis certain, they have all this in them, enough to keep their Souls in the ſtate of a perpetual Humiliation under the Hand of God, and to oblige them to a watchful Fidelity in all they do. But if theſe permit their Spirit to be ſo perplexed with Fears, as to loſe all Courage in the performance of the beſt Exerciſes, to have their Minds oppreſs'd with endleſs Doubts and Confuſion, and to be at a ſtand in every Duty; 'tis certain, they are then wanting in that Hope, they ought to have in God, and reflect not, how Infinite his Mercies are, who, upon ſeeing Failings in themſelves, and the frequent Diſappointments of their good Purpoſes, preſently are inclin'd to give themſelves for loſt, as if God could not ſave them, becauſe they cannot ſave themſelves.

This diſtruſtful trouble has a ſecret Pride at the root, which permits them not to bear the Conviction of their being Imperfect, nor to have Patience with thoſe Infirmities, which God mercifully per-

mits for their Exercise, and greater Virtue; and being under this disquiet, they have scarce hopes of Salvation, because they see not things so well within them, as to build this Hope on themselves. But this being a Disposition so unbecoming Christians, who are commanded to distrust in themselves, and rest with their whole Confidence in God, these ought with more Patience submit to their Poverty, and learn to have Comfort and Hope in the Infinite Mercies of God, when they can have none in themselves. Thus they are bound to moderate their Disquiets; and if they are not industrious in thus checking this sanctified Pride, they may easily contract by this a greater guilt, than that, which they pretend as the occasion of their Grief. Teach, O God, these uneasie and impatient Souls to depend with greater Confidence on thee; make them more discreet in their Fears, and strengthen them in Hope: Let the greatness of thy Mercies draw all Sinners to thee, because thy Mercies are above all their Sins. Confirm me in this Hope; in this may I live, and when Death comes, in this Hope may I breath my last; That thou art full of Mercy, O God, and that none shall be Confounded, who put their Trust in Thee.

Fourth

Fourth Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL,

Luke C. 5. V. 1. ends V. 11.

THE multitude preſs'd upon Jeſus to hear the Word of God. It was a good ſign in this People, to be thus earneſt in following Chriſt, to hear from him the Doctrine of Salvation. Souls quicken'd with the love of God, and the deſire of a better Life, are carried there with eagerneſs, where they have hopes of being inform'd or help'd on in their way. Salvation is their great Buſineſs, and the Solicitude of obtaining it, is as great a ſpur upon them, in ſeeking what may contribute towards it, as the love of Gain is in the Husbandman or Merchant, in drawing them, where they have the Encouragement of making a good Market. Where this earneſtneſs is not found in Chriſtians, they have reaſon to ſuſpect themſelves, as not being ſincere and hearty in what they profeſs; and to be jealous, that, while they pretend to Heaven, 'tis not this, but ſomething elſe is their Buſineſs.

As for ſuch therefore, as are little concern'd in hearing or reading what is good, or in meeting with thoſe Perſons, whom they know beſt qualified for giving them

help; and are so far from improving the Opportunities, that offer, as industriously to decline them, or let every Inclination, or Trifle, or even Sloth, put them by those Exercises, which would so much contribute to the giving them Life, or Light, in the Affairs of their Souls, I cannot but apprehend their State to be dangerous, and that there is but little or no Life in them, where the Actions of Life do not appear. Let these be their own Judges, in taking Measure of themselves from other proportion'd Circumstances of Human Life. Can they think those Sick Persons to be desirous of Health who are not Solicitous for what may be their Cure? Are those very Hungry, who neither seek nor accept good Meat, that is offer'd? Are those Travellers much bent upon their Journeys end, who make no enquiry, and avoid such as would shew them the Way? This Indifferency is as evident as Demonstration, in discovering the Disposition and inward Sentiments of such Persons: And may not these, from such obvious Observations, make some Judgment of themselves? For do not they know, their Souls are in great Disorder, and subject to many Distempers? Is there not a weakness upon them, such as requires wholsome Food for recovering due strength of Mind? Are not they upon a Jour-

Journey, in which they may eaſily miſtake the Way, and a Miſcarriage is of no leſs than an Eternal Conſequence? And have not they ſenſe to know, that Hearing good Inſtructions, Reading Spiritual Books, Diſcourſing with Perſons of known Experience, Charity and Zeal, is both Medicinal for the Cure of their diſtempers, Nouriſhing for regaining Strength, and Directive for pointing out their way? And what then muſt be the Concluſion, upon their neglecting theſe ordinary Means, which God has made eaſie to them, and mercifully ordain'd for their help? Is it not plain, that both the Health and Strength of Soul, and coming at length ſafe to Heaven, is not their Concern, that this is not their Buſineſs, that they are contented under their Miſery and Darkneſs, and deſire no relief? The Caſe ſeems ſo evident, that, I think, there needs no more, than the general Obſervation of ſuch neglect, to lament the great unhappineſs of ſuch Perſons, as not having the Love of God in them, or a deſire of being Sav'd.

But however, tho' this be ſo dangerous a Symptom; yet I cannot flatter thoſe with any Promiſes of Security, who, being not Subject to this Neglect, are Zealous in the Means and Exerciſes here recommended; becauſe there is a ſort of

Zeal

Zeal, which is very barren; and as we ſee this People of the Jews, who were ever preſſing in Crouds upon Jeſus Chriſt, and yet continued almoſt all in their Blindneſs and Infidelity, ſo it may eaſily be with Chriſtians; they may diſtinguiſh themſelves by a remarkable Eagerneſs and Heat; they may be conſtant in the Church, they may preſs cloſe upon an admir'd Conductor, and contenting themſelves with this External Singularity, be wholly careleſs as to the interior, and in bringing forth Fruit anſwerable to the Promiſes of their commendable Zeal. What therefore are our Heats, what our Eagerneſs, what our Zeal! They are all to be ſuſpected, if the Works appear not, or, at leaſt, if they are not accompanied with watchful and induſtrious Endeavours for overcoming Evil, and approaching to the Life of Chriſt. And can this be ſaid, with Truth of all; ſince of thoſe, who are under the cover of Sanctity, ſo many are Hypocrites, ſo many have Intereſt in their Eye, ſo many Court the Reputation of Holineſs, ſo many are carried on by Curioſity, Vanity and Humour, ſo many by Cuſtom? And is it not the remarkable Irregularity, if not Iniquity, of ſome of theſe, Notorious for their Diſſimulation, Lying, Detracting, Whiſpering, Animoſities, Malice, Envy, and even Cheating, has

has brought a profeſs'd Sanctity into that diſrepute, that 'tis generally ſuſpected by the Obſervers, as an expedient taken up for ſome worldly deſign, for the effecting it with more Security?

There has been ſo much of this amongſt Chriſtians, that, 'tis plain, the beſt Exerciſes are abus'd, and that there can be no dependance on the moſt conſtant practice of them, except it be accompanied with the Endeavours of a ſincere Heart, excluding the World in what it does, and deſiring nothing, but to know and love God, and to be skill'd in the Ways that lead to him. If theſe be not the Conditions of ſuch, as undertake to follow Chriſt, they will do like St. *Peter* here, and his Companions, labour all Night, and take nothing. Thus, it muſt be confeſs'd, all thoſe do above-mention'd; they work in the Night, becauſe they propoſe nothing above this World, and take not Chriſt with them, who is the true Light; and when they have thus labour'd many Years, what have they taken? If they have gain'd Reputation with Men, or otherwiſe proſper'd in their vile Deſigns, when the Nets are drawn up, it will all appear to be nothing, or rather worſe than nothing, in finding the Fruit of their Labours, to be their own Judgment, for having unworthily ſubjected

Heaven to Earth, and abus'd the Things of God, for ſeeking Glory with Men.

The ſure Method then for rendring all Exerciſes of Piety fruitful, and making them the Arguments of True Diſciples, is to follow St. *Peter* in the ſecond caſting of his Net; *In verbo tuo laxabo rete: Lord in thy word I will let go the Net.* He had taken nothing all the Night, but now, upon Chriſt's Command, and depending on his Bleſſing, he tries again, and his Faith is rewarded with a wonderful Succeſs. In this manner all Chriſtians ought to undertake whatever they do; the Word of Chriſt is to be the Subject of their Confidence; and tho' they are to be Induſtrious, yet they are not to depend on their Labour, but on the Order and Bleſſing of Heaven: Thus in Reading and Praying, and in the performance of other Spiritual Duties, they are to put Earth out of ſight, and ſhutting their Eyes againſt all that is Human, are to regard only the Orders of Heaven, preſcribing theſe Exerciſes, as the Means for obtaining Light and Grace they are to reſt all their hopes of Succeſs on the Power and Goodneſs of God; and thus beginning, and going on with the Diſpoſitions of Humility, Sincerity, and Faith, they will be out of danger of abuſing what is holy, and will not fail of the Fruits of their Labour.

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If this ſame were the Method of Chriſtians in all Temporal Buſineſs, ſo as to undertake nothing, but according to the Order of Chriſt, that is, what is lawful and juſt, and ſtand with Reſolution againſt thoſe ſiniſter Motives of Covetouſneſs, Ambition, and a worldly Spirit, and daily beſeech God to Bleſs their Endeavours, how might they thus join Heaven and Earth together, and even then lay up Treaſures in Heaven, while they are providing for the Subſiſtance of a ſhort Life! Obtain, O Jeſus, this Spirit for all thy Faithful, make them Zealous in every Duty; teach them to ſeek thee, but with ſuch Sincerity, that they may not proſtitute Holy Things to the Service of their own Corruption; teach them to depend with an entire Confidence on thee, that beginning all in thy Name, and reſting on thy Bleſſing, they may thus find the Fruit of their Labours, both for this Life, and a better to come.

Fifth Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL,

Mat. C. 5. V. 20. ends V. 24.

IF your Juſtice exceeds not that of the Scribes and Phariſees, you ſhall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. The Taſk here

here propos'd to Christians, of exceeding the Justice of the Pharisees, seems not very great, if we judge of the Pharisees, from the Impressions made by those reproachful Characters, with which they are generally charg'd in the Gospel; for these have something so very black in them, that the Condition of being better than they, has no appearance of difficulty in it. But if we examin the Pharisees more in retail, we shall find the Task growing upon our Hands, and that 'tis much easier falling short, than going beyond them. For to give them their due, 'tis not observ'd, that Christ any where reproaches them, as wanting in Faith; they are not condemn'd of any open breach of the Commandments, either of Perjury, Adultery, Murther, Theft, or breaking of the Sabbath; they were exact, even to niceness, in observing the Law of *Moses*: They were constant in Prayer; Fasted twice every Week; they were Zealous in opposing Errors, and converting Infidels to the true Religion; all this is acknowledg'd of them in the Gospel: And are not here so many commendable qualities, that, whoever now should live up to them, would be esteem'd a Good Christian? And yet 'tis declar'd here by Truth it self, that whoever exceeds not the Justice of the Pharisees, shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

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The Chriſtian then muſt not be wanting in any commendable quality found in the Phariſees, and one Condition of Salvation being to out go them, he muſt ſee what was wanting in them, that ſo he may be ſenſible, how to level his Endeavours. And this he may comprehend, by obſerving, what are the Particulars, of which, they are reproach'd by Chriſt. The principal one, is, That they eſteem'd all Virtue to conſiſt in the outward Obſervation of the Precepts, without being concern'd, what paſs'd in the Heart; hence the Deſires of Revenge, Covetouſneſs, Uncleanneſs, Envy, *&c.* gave them no occaſion of Scruple, ſo they committed not the outward Actions; and thus their Watch, was upon their Hands, and not on the Heart. This is often Charg'd upon them by Chriſt, who compares them to Sepulchers, beautified without, but within full of Corruption, and reproaches them for cleaning the outſide of their Veſſels, without regarding what was within.

This miſtaken Notion of Virtue, was neceſſarily follow'd with a Confidence in themſelves, and a Preſumption of their own Sanctity; becauſe their outward Actions being viſible and certain, they had upon this falſe ground, no reaſon to doubt of it. Hence they know nothing of interior Humility or Fear, as having nothing

thing to ſuſpect in themſelves of Evil, and appear'd boldly before God; and hence they had a Contempt for all others, who did not come up to their external Exactneſs in every Point; and thus giving themſelves the preference, expected the ſame from others, as what was their due.

Theſe are ſome principal Points, in which the Phariſees fail'd; ſo that while they were the moſt virtuous in appearance, amongſt the Jews, they are yet Condemn'd as the moſt Criminal amongſt them. Hence may the Chriſtian learn, what his Obligation is; and, firſt, muſt ſet down this for a Principle; That however he may be exempt from all outward Crimes, yet, upon this, he has no Aſſurance, but he may be worſe, in the ſight of God, than the moſt notorious Sinners; becauſe he knows not the meaſure of his interior Pride or Ingratitude. Not that God will impute to him theſe Evils, as long as they are involuntary; yet ſince he cannot with Aſſurance diſtinguiſh, what is the Principle of his Actions, or to what Point his thoughts and deſires are voluntary or involuntary, he cannot be certain whether that, which ſeems Good in him, be Real or Falſe, Chriſtian or Phariſaical. In this he ſees the Foundation of Preſumption, Confidence and Self-eſteem quite taken away, as likewiſe of all Contempt

tempt of others, who ſeem not ſo Regular as himſelf, and a Sure Ground laid for a perpetual Humiliation and Fear.

Secondly, He ſees the neceſſity of keeping a ſtrict watch upon the inward Man, for that in the Heart is the Root of all Evil; and thoſe Spiritual Vices which are not diſcernable to the Eye, are as deteſtable before God, as the more notorious Sins; and the more Dangerous, becauſe the Objects are continual, their Obſtacles are leſs, and their Aſpect not ſo foul.

Thirdly, Since the very Inſtance mention'd here by Chriſt, in which the Chriſtian is to exceed the Phariſees, is that of Anger, Hatred or Revenge againſt his Brother, he ſee a neceſſity of being particularly Nice in this point, and that he is not only to obſerve the Letter of the Law in not killing, but likewiſe be watchful againſt the ſeemingly inconſiderable Diſpoſitions, that lead towards it; for that God will not judge Hatred by the outward Effects, but condemns it in ſelf, when no ſuch Effects appear. Whilſt therefore the Phariſee thinks himſelf Innocent, as long as he dyes not his Hands in his Neighbour's Blood; the Chriſtian muſt take his Direction from Chriſt's Mouth, who here declares in this Goſpel, That whoever is Angry with his Brother,

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is guilty of Sin, and that God will punish him more severely, than ordinary Crimes were punish'd amongst the Jews; that if Anger breaks forth into reproachful Words, its Judgment shall be still more rigorous; but if it comes once to a form'd Hatred, so as to propose the Ruin of others Reputation, by such injurious Attempts, as was that of calling *Fool* amongst the Jews, this shall be chastis'd with Hell-fire.

If this be the Character Christ gives of this Sin, and expresly requires Christians in this Point, to out-do the Pharisees, and, upon want of compliance, cuts them of from the hopes of Salvation, ought it not to be the Subject of their daily Care, to avoid this Evil, and chuse rather to submit with patience to the common Provocations of it, than by satisfying a peevish or angry Humour, to draw upon themselves a much greater Mischief, than what they so much resent from their Neighbour's Hands? It is certainly an unreasonable Passion, which complaining of one Evil, seeks remedy by running into greater. And yet unreasonable as it is, and sentenc'd with such a heavy Doom, as here pronounc'd, is not however the Practice of it as common among Christians, as if it were recommended by Reason, and had the Promises of Faith to encourage it? If we open but our Ears to the World

World, what is the noiſe, but of Clamour, Paſſion, Diſſention and Revenge? And if better Education, or the Profeſſion of Piety gives a Check to the tumultuous part, is there not ſtill ſuch Management, as to keep up the bitterneſs of Paſſion, without the Noiſe? O God, I cannot but lament the Miſery of Chriſtians in this Point, who, let every ordinary Provocation, and even groundleſs Jealouſies, be enough to exaſperate them againſt their Brother; and having variety of Colours, wherewith to diſguiſe their Paſſion, ſhew their Art in making themſelves unhappy, by nouriſhing Gall within their Breaſts, inſtead of that Charity, which thou exacteſt from them. Thou haſt ſhewn ſufficiently thy Averſion to this Evil, in requiring thoſe, who offend their Neighbour, to go forthwith, and make their peace with him; poſitively declaring, thou wilt hear no Prayers, nor receive any Offering from their Hands, till they are reconcil'd with him. Thus thou endeavour'ſt to prevent or heal all Wounds of Paſſion; and ſhew'ſt that none can have any Intereſt or Help in thee, but by keeping peace with their Neighbour; and yet neither thy Commands nor Threats prevail; but there is ſtill as little Charity amongſt Believers, as if they believ'd not; where then is their Faith, where their Love

or Fear of thee? Remedy this Evil, O God, we beſeech thee, and permit not Chriſtians to be worſe than Phariſees, while they are ſo ſtrictly enjoin'd to be better. Give to all a Senſe of their Duty; make them underſtand, how Miſerable they are, in ſhutting Heaven againſt themſelves; teach them to be Patient and Meek, that they may not be Eternally Confounded with the Folly of having taken Revenge of themſelves, for the Injuries they reſented as receiv'd from others.

Sixth Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL.

Mark C. 8. V. 1. ends V. 9.

I *Have Compaſſion on the Multitude.* They are the Words of Chriſt, ſeeing the People abiding with him three Days in the Deſart, unprovided of all things neceſſary for their Subſiſtance; and therefore turning to his Diſciples, he ſays, *I have Compaſſion on the Multitude; for behold, 'tis now three days they abide with me, having nothing to eat; and if I ſend them away faſting, they will faint in the way;* this was the Condition of this People; and ſince we ſee, it rais'd Compaſſion in Chriſt for their relief, may not all Pious Souls here juſtly hope, the ſame Bowels will be mov'd upon them? If

If theſe weigh the Circumſtances, in which they are in this Life, they will find themſelves as much unprovided as this People in the Deſart; for is not Heaven their Home, and the Place to which they are to go? And what is their diſtance from it? They cannot but be ſenſible, their Sins divide them from God, and according to the number and weight of their Sins, ſo are they remov'd at a diſtance from Heaven. How great then is this diſtance? The People here mention'd, were not three Days Journey from home: Can Chriſtians ſay ſo of themſelves? Let them but reflect, how many years they have been running from God, and then gueſs, how far they are from him, and whether their Return be not rather a Journey of years than Days. Then, if they conſider the Place, in which they are, they will find it falling ſhort in nothing of the Horror of a Deſart: For what kind of Horror can there be, which they have not before them? Precipice, and Quick-Sands, and Torrents are on every ſide; ſuch are all the Vicious Practices, which have Authority and Cuſtom to recommend them; and yet their danger is ſuch, that whoever unhappily falls into them, ſtands in need of a Miracle, to prevent his ſinking, or being carried into Hell. As for wild Beaſts, I believe, they may match with all the De-

Deſarts of the World put together; for if they look on the Fury of Men perſecuting one another, with what Malice and Envy they purſue their Neighbour, how they ſeek and rejoice in the Oppreſſion and Ruin of the Innocent; how they lay Snares for one another in all manner of Buſineſs, ſo that no body has any Confidence of their Security, but from their own Induſtry and Watchfulneſs; how all things are carried by Power and Strength, from ſuch a Proſpect, of which this is but a glimpſe, it will appear, that what we call'd the Civiliz'd World, is more a Deſart of wild Beaſts, if Unreaſonableneſs, Rage, Cruelty and Madneſs be the Ingredients of them, than any other we call by that Name. And if any thing be wanting, let but the interior of Chriſtians be view'd, and there will be found all the Deformity, that makes up Monſters; let their Method be obſerv'd on communicating their Poyſon, and drawing one another into Sin, and there will appear the Venom of Aſps and Baſiliſks; let their Practice be conſider'd of helping to Damn one another, and if it be well look'd into that this is not only the Buſineſs of Strangers, but of Friends to Friends, of Relations to Relations, nay, even of Parents often to the Children of their own Bowels, and that in this is their greateſt Paſtime

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and Divertiſements, nay, the ſubject of Boaſts and Glory, and it muſt be confeſs'd, that Chriſtians, in Cruelty and Barbarity, out-do the Beaſts of prey, and may juſtly be Character'd, not only as wild Beaſts, but Devils.

Thus has the Believing World all the Characters of a Deſart, and while the beſt of Chriſtians live in this Deſart, they have no other Security, but like thoſe, who travel amongſt Wild Beaſts, by going always arm'd, and ſtanding upon their defence. And what have they for the Support and Nouriſhment of their Spiritual Life? This Deſart affords no Food, whereon to ſubſiſt; all that is in it, is Venemous, conveying Poyſon into their Souls; all is the Food of Pride, Senſuality, Ambition, Covetouſneſs and Luxury, ſo that if they are not ever upon the guard, in caſe of their eſcaping others Cruelty, their Ruin will be from themſelves.

This is the true ſtate of all Chriſtians in this World, and this the reaſon of many walling themſelves up againſt it, and of others chuſing to live rather amongſt Beaſts than Men. Now if Miſery be a Motive of Compaſſion, and a general Unhappineſs touches the Bowels of Mercy; may not this Miſery of Chriſtians be as ſtrong a Plea, as that of the People mention'd in this Deſart? And may not Chriſtians

ſtians hence ground their hopes, that He, who compaſſionating the Multitude in the Deſart, provided them with Neceſſaries for preſent Subſiſtance, and to carry them home, will likewiſe Commiſerate them in their Unhappineſs, and let the Effects of his Mercy appear in the Relief of their Wants, and for their Security amidſt the Terrors, with which they are encompaſs'd? One thing is certain, that without his help, we ſhall not be able to finiſh our Journey, and that if he lets us go faſting, we ſhall faint in the way; and ſince this Diſtreſs of the People then mov'd him to work a Miracle in their Favour; why may not we depend on the ſame Goodneſs for our help.

No queſtion we may; but then ſuch as deſire it, ought to learn from this People, to prepare themſelves for it. Theſe follow'd him into the Deſart; ſo muſt Chriſtians, by the practice of ſuch Truths, as the World does not underſtand, and therefore are, as it were, deſerted and abandon'd by it; they muſt withdraw ſo far from the World, or the diſtracting Confuſion of it, as to poſſeſs their own Souls, to labour in the overcoming their Paſſions, to Adore, Pray, and have their Ears and Hearts open to Jeſus Chriſt; and what is this, but either wholly to retire from

from the World, or live ſo in the World, as if they were not in it?

They muſt, like this People, ſeek firſt the Kingdom of God, who not Sollicitous for their Affairs at home, ſeem wholly bent upon hearing Chriſt, and learning from him the ways of Salvation. Not that Chriſtians are to neglect their Family-duties, or thoſe of their State, but to remember, while they are faithful in theſe, that the Buſineſs of Heaven be not neglected; but, that as this is the greater Concern, ſo it ought to have the greater part of their daily Sollicitude and Labour. For if this World has the encloſure of their Thoughts and Induſtry, and the Concern of Eternity is generally put by on this account, and as a Buſineſs of Indifferency, to be done, if there be nothing to hinder it, and otherwiſe to be let alone, this is putting Heaven to chance; and ſuch Chriſtians cannot wonder, if they faint in the way, and, for want of ſtrength, are not able to walk in the way of God's Commandments.

They muſt again, like this People, who ſtaid three Days in the Deſart, not only undertake the Buſineſs of Salvation, but be induſtrious to perſever in it. In this Work there will be many Difficulties, not only from the World, and interior Corruption, but likewiſe ſometimes from the

Hand of God himſelf, who ſends many Trials for the Exerciſe of Humility and Patience, and even then ſeems to have no regard to diſtreſs'd Souls, when they think themſelves ready to ſink under the weight of Temporal or Spiritual Evils. But this People, who ſtill kept their Eyes upon Chriſt, when they ſaw nothing to prevent their periſhing, ſhew, what ought to be the Fidelity of Chriſtians, and that they are not only to be conſtant in all Duties amidſt his Bleſſings, and when the ſweetneſs of ſenſible Comforts is an invitation to them, but then more faithfully, when they ſeem to themſelves forſaken both by God and Man. This is difficult, but this Difficulty is the beſt Trial of Perſeverance; and Fidelity here, is that, which moſt effectually opens the Hands of God, and obliges him to the Aſſiſtance of ſuch Souls by Miracle, if ordinary Means are not ſufficient for them. Chriſt help'd not this Multitude, till he had firſt made them ſit down upon the Earth; and till Chriſtians, by the Experience of their own Weakneſs and Nothing, are humbled in their own Eyes, and ſo truly upon the Earth, that they have no Confidence in themſelves, they are not in a Diſpoſition of being fed by Chriſt. The Force of Unbelievers is from their Pride and Ambition, which ſpur them on; but the

the ſtrength of the Faithful muſt come from their Humility, which caſts them upon the ground.

In this manner are Chriſtians to prepare for the Nouriſhment of Divine Grace: Teach us, O Jeſus, to prepare our ſelves for this Heavenly Food: For we are ſenſible of the many Dangers of this Life, and of our great Diſtance from Heaven; and we know our Weakneſs to be ſuch, that if thou help'ſt us not, we ſhall certainly periſh in the way: Thou had'ſt Compaſſion on the Multitude, have likewiſe Compaſſion on us, have regard to our Miſery, and turn not thy Eyes from us, becauſe we have no help in our ſelves but only in thee.

Seventh Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL,

Mat. C. 7. V. 15. ends V. 21.

EVERY *Tree, that brings not forth good Fruit ſhall be cut down, and caſt into the Fire.* That the Tree, which brings forth evil Fruit, ſhould be condemn'd to the Flames is no wonder; but it has ſomething of ſurprize in it, that this ſhould be the Sentence of the Tree, on which good Fruit is

not found; for if Evil be condemn'd, why ſhould the ſame be the Fate of that, in which no Evil appears? And yet this is the poſitive Sentence of Juſtice it ſelf; He has pronounc'd it, and it admits neither of Appeal or Reprieve. What then is the meaning of it? The Fate of Chriſtians is emblem'd in Trees; for what is ſpoke of Trees, is for the Inſtruction of Men; and the Inſtruction is this; That not only thoſe, who live engag'd in open Vice, and are remarkably wicked, ſhall receive the Judgment of Everlaſting Fire; but they alſo ſhall be involv'd in the ſame Unhappineſs; who being exempt from what is generally reputed Vicious, have nothing Good found in them.

The reaſon is, becauſe ſuch Chriſtians live in the poſitive breach of the General Commandment of God, who expreſly requires all, To avoid Evil, and do Good; *Declina a malo, & fac bonum.* The whole Commandment muſt be ſatisfied, and they who obſerve but one part, and omit the other, live under the guilt of tranſgreſſing the Precept, and can be eſteem'd no better than Faithleſs and Diſobedient Children; and who can then wonder at the Puniſhment of a Diſobedience, which is not accidental, but habitual, and the general practice of Life? If the Tree be planted

planted for bringing forth good Fruit, and it proves ever barren, is not this enough to have it rooted up? Thus it is ſentenc'd, you ſee, in this Goſpel; and in another place, for the ſame reaſon, order is given by the Maſter of the Vineyard, for its being cut down, with this Reproach, *Ut quid enim terram occupat?* Why ſhould ſuch a ūſeleſs Stock have place in his Vineyard? And no other Reprieve was granted it, but upon the hopes of its bearing Fruit.

This opens the Way for another reaſon; for ſince Man was created for the Poſſeſſion of God, and whatever Bleſſings he receives, whether Goods of Nature or of Fortune, are the Gifts of God, granted him, for this end, that by a due uſe of them, he may work out his Salvation, and come to the Poſſeſſion of God; 'tis evident, the Chriſtian, who employs not what he has receiv'd, for this End, does not anſwer the Purpoſes of God, but fails in the Principal End of his Creation. And can this be without a Crime? Read the Caſe in that Servant, who receiving a Talent from his Maſter, that he might advance it by Traffick, and inſtead of this buried it in a Napkin: And how was his Plea receiv'd? He is Condemn'd as a Wicked and Unprofitable Servant, and

caſt forth into utter Darkneſs. But why? Did he turn to his own uſe, or otherwiſe miſpend his Maſters Money? No, but he did not employ it according to order, nor anſwer the End, for which it was put into his Hand; and this was Crime enough to draw upon him the Diſpleaſure of his Lord, and to be no more reckon'd as one of his Servants.

May not Chriſtians ſee in this, that 'tis not only a Sin viciouſly to miſ-employ what they have receiv'd; but that they likewiſe will be caſt off, as unprofitable Servants, who have not improv'd, what was entruſted with them for God's Glory, and their own Salvation? Becauſe, tho' we ſuppoſe, no evil Fruit appears in them, yet they bring not forth good Fruit, which is Crime enough in thoſe, who upon ſo many Titles, are oblig'd to abound in good Fruit, and cannot fail of ſo doing, but by offending againſt Gratitude, Juſtice and Charity, and being guilty of Abuſing whatever they have receiv'd

If this be the deciſion of this Caſe, who are the Chriſtians chiefly concern'd in it? All are concern'd; but thoſe principally ſeem touch'd at, who are call'd Tepid or Luke-warm Chriſtians; thoſe, who being not corrupted with the Scandalous Vices of the World, and upon this con-

conſideration are generally reputed good, are however ſubject to that interior indifferency of Spirit, that neither the Love of God, Deſire of Heaven, or Fear of Hell, ſcarce make any Impreſſions on them; ſo that tho' they are not willing wholly to omit thoſe Exerciſes, which are the help of the Soul, yet they are not careful enough to perform them in ſuch a manner, as to receive help from them; hence all they do, that has the appearance of good, is perform'd out of Cuſtom, or as a meer Formality, without the Induſtry of putting Life to thoſe Actions, which are only a dead Form without it. And their Sollicitude being but very little for theſe Duties, hence every ordinary Accident is reaſon enough for diſpenſing with them; thus they are often omitted for Company, often for Divertiſements, often for ſuppos'd Indiſpoſition, often for Sloth it ſelf: And the ſame diſorder generally attends them in reſpect of all that is good; for there being no good to be done, which has not its Difficulties ariſing from the Averſion of a Corrupt Nature, that Lazineſs, which oppreſſes their Mind, is like a Clog upon them, from which they cannot eaſily diſengage themſelves; and therefore they chuſe rather, in favour of Self-love, to ſit ſtill, than to take pains in

ſhaking it off: Hence their Deſigns of good fall ſhort of whatever they propoſe, and they ſeldom ſatisfy any Duties, either of Penance or Charity; and thus, tho' they are not ſcandalouſly wicked, yet they bring not forth good Fruit.

The number of theſe Chriſtians, I fear, is very great in the World, and their Caſe is here declar'd ſo deſperate, that 'tis juſtly expected, that of thoſe, who, by their exemption from Crimes, are ſuppos'd to be in a good way, many will be diſappointed of what they expect, thro' the unhappy Effects of this ſlothfull indifferency, by which their Souls are kept in ſuch a barren ſtate, as to have only the Leaves, but not the fruit of a Chriſtian Life; however therefore this rank of Chriſtians, may flatter themſelves with a good Opinion of the Way, in which they are, by looking on others, who live profeſſedly wicked; yet this can give them no Security, for that 'tis no Argument of their being in the Way to Heaven, becauſe they ſee others more out of it than themſelves; if only the Trees, that bear evil Fruit, were condemn'd to the Fire, this might afford them ſome hopes, but ſince thoſe alſo fall under the ſame Condemnation, which bring not forth good Fruit, where is their Comfort? If they will take with them

them the Judgment of others, even of the Ancient and moſt Experienc'd Fathers of the Church, theſe will turn the Ballance the other way, by informing them, that there is greater hope of the Vicious, than the Tepid Chriſtian; that while many Carnal Souls have renounc'd their wicked Ways, and become eminent for Piety, they could give no ſuch Comfortable Inſtances of thoſe, who liv'd on in a ſlothful Tepidity. And there may be reaſon enough; for that Vicious Chriſtians are ſenſible of there being no hopes of Salvation for them, as long as they abide in that ſtate of Death, and therefore, that they are under the neceſſity of a Change: But theſe joining the hopes of Salvation with a ſtate, that will not bear it, live on without apprehending the neceſſity of a Change, and thus are found without Fruit, when Death comes to ſeize them.

The better Fate then of theſe Chriſtians, depends upon their having a worſe Opinion of the ſtate, in which they are, and ſettling this Judgment, That they are not in the Way of Salvation; that as long as they take not pains in Religious Duties, are not Sollicitous to overcome their ſluggiſh Humour, do not ſeek firſt the Kingdom of God, do not direct their Lives with

with reference to his Glory, do not live according to the Spirit of Christ, in daily and continual Endeavours for doing the Will of their Father, they cannot expect to find Favour with God: And therefore, that 'tis their Obligation to be more in earnest in all that concerns the Soul, to make Salvation their Business, to be constant and fervent in Prayer, to humble themselves under the Sense of their Poverty, to seek the Life of Grace, in all those Means, which God has ordain'd for their help, to study the length of Eternity, and the value of a Soul, in that Price, which Christ has paid for it, to be zealous in doing the will of God, to manage well their Time and Temporal Goods, so as to make them serviceable for Eternity, and to abound in every good Work; this is the Fruit, which is expected from every Christian, and where this is not found, there can be no possibility of escaping the Sentence of the Barren Tree; *Cut it down, and cast it into the Fire*

O God, give to all Christians a Sense of this terrible Truth; let those endless Flames, which are prepar'd for the Wicked and Unprofitable Servant, raise up their worldly and sluggish Souls from the Sleep of Tepidity, so unworthy of their Vocation, and so hateful in thy sight; give

give them a new Spirit, that with vigour and life, they may purſue the Ways of Salvation, and never be at peace with themſelves, till they have work'd their Souls into the happy Diſpoſition, of being ever zealous in doing thy Holy Will.

Eighth Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL,

Luke. C. 16. V. 1. ends V. 9.

Give an account of thy Stewardſhip; for now thou canſt be Steward no longer. This Goſpel is the Parable of the Unjuſt Steward, in which we are not to have regard to his Injuſtice, by which he waſted his Maſters Goods, nor to his Fraud, in changing the Obligations of the Debtors; but only to thoſe Truths, which Chriſt here deſigns to teach us; which are, firſt, The unhappy ſtate, into which this Steward had brought himſelf, repreſenting the ſtate of all Chriſtians: Secondly, The Means he us'd for preventing the Miſery he apprehended, which are here recommended, as the beſt Security againſt the Misfortunes, that threaten us.

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The Perſon here mention'd, was the Steward of a certain Rich Man, and we are all the Stewards of God: Upon whatever Title we hold what we poſſeſs, yet ſtill God has the Dominion over all, as Soveraign Lord, and upon this Title, which is founded upon an Eternal Law, and therefore not to be alienated, he can command and diſpoſe of all, and we cannot complain of Injuſtice, when he takes from us, or obliges us to ſurrender what we call our own. Holding therefore all under God, we are his Stewards, not only as to the Goods we have in our Power, but likewiſe, as to the uſe of thoſe Goods; For it cannot be imagin'd, God has entruſted them in our Hands for us to diſpoſe of at pleaſure; no, theſe Goods are deſign'd by Providence, as Means for the Subſiſtance of men; and he has depoſited them in the Hands of ſome, that they may diſtribute them to others. A Rich Man therefore, as Rich, is no other than a Steward of thoſe Goods, which God has entruſted with him; and 'tis not allow'd him to let them be diſpos'd of by Phancy, Humour, or Corruption; but all is to be done with regard to the Engagements of Providence, to Neceſſity, and to the Order of Charity. Theſe are the Terms, upon which all receive whatever they poſſeſs;

poſſeſs; and 'tis what is preſcrib'd them, not by Temporal Laws, which may be chang'd, but by an Eternal Law, which is unchangeable.

And this is not the Condition only of the Rich, but likewiſe of all others; for if they are not Stewards of Poſſeſſions and Money, yet they are to give an account of the Goods of Nature, of their Soul and Body, their Time, Thoughts, Deſires, Health, Senſes, &c. Nay, even of their Misfortunes, Sickneſs, Poverty, Loſſes; for all theſe being Means for the practice of Virtue, they are a kind of Talents, which ought to be improv'd, and an account will be demanded, how we have us'd them,

Thus we are all the Stewards of God, and the Summons will be Particular to every Chriſtian; *Redde rationem villicationis tuæ: Give an account of thy Stewardſhip.* Now, when we look back on all that is paſt, and ſee, how little we have correſponded with the Orders of our Lord, either in the Goods of Fortune, or of Nature; how uncapable we are of ſaying with truth, that with every Five Talents receiv'd, we have gain'd other Five; but have proſtituted the greateſt part to Vice, Vanity, Folly, or Humour: That nothing of all we have done, can be hid from his Eyes,

Eyes, who will demand the account; that our very Actions will ſpeak and diſcover themſelves, notwithſtanding all the Colours, with which we have diſguiz'd them in the ſight of Men; have not all reaſon to apprehend the Conſequence of their ill management, and that, being rejected by their Lord, Eternal Poverty will be the Puniſhment of their ill Adminiſtration? May not therefore every one cry out, with this Steward, *Quid faciam? What ſhall I do?* He juſtly may.

But he that beſt knows our Misfortune, here mercifully points out the ſureſt Means for preventing it; and that is, by making a good uſe of the Goods of our Lord, which yet remain in our Hands, and by employing them, as far as Neceſſity will allow, in Works of Mercy. This would be unjuſt in reſpect of Men; but 'tis not ſo in regard of God, who is repreſented here under the Parable of a Rich Man: Nay, 'tis the very thing he preſcribes, that ſo he may provide Friends, for our defence againſt that Poverty, with which we are threatn'd. What he adviſes therefore is, that inſtead of all thoſe Expences, which are to ſupport Pride and Pleaſure, and inſtead of all thoſe Superfluities, which are to anſwer the demands of Humour and Self-love, we

we now with a Pious Induſtry turn all that, which has been hitherto miſ-employ'd, to Works of Charity, and in preparing for our ſelves Advocates for the other Life.

Not that Alms are ſo powerful, as to ſave any Sinner, without true Repentance; there being no Remiſſion of Sins to be expected, but by a ſincere Converſion of the Heart; but that God many times does not grant this true Converſion, but as mov'd to it by Works of Charity, and plentiful Alms. And 'tis in this Senſe, Chriſt ſays to the Phariſees, That in giving, what they had ſuperfluous, to the Poor, all ſhould be clean to them; and in the ſame, *Nebuchadonoſor* is counſell'd to Redeem his Sins by Alms. For it cannot be pretended, that God will pardon unrepenting Sinners: But Rich Men are here inform'd, that the Principal Means, which God puts into their Hands, for obtaining this Spirit of Penance, is to ſeek it by giving Alms, and thus to provide themſelves Friends, who will interceed with him in their behalf.

But this is not a help for the Rich only, but for all, of whatever Condition; there being none to be ſav'd, but by the practice of Charity in the Works of Mercy; as appears in the Sentence of the laſt Day, which

which calls the Elect to the Joys of Heaven; as the Reward of their Charity, and condemns the Reprobate as unworthy, for not having practis'd it. 'Tis therefore a thing, which falls within the compass of every state; those, who have no Money, have it in their power to give Spiritual Alms, by Instructing, Councelling, Reproving, Comforting; by Bearing and Forbearing; by Patience, Sweetness, Compassion, Forgiving; by good Example, and doing all to Edification; by good Wishes, Desires, Prayers; by lamenting the Misery of Sinners, and Blindness of Unbelievers, and soliciting Heaven in their behalf, by Tears, Fasting and Self-denials: None can pretend, they have it not in their power to practice these Charities; and 'tis by the practice of these, all are to seek for the Mercies of God, both for the Pardon of Sin, and Establishment in all good.

By the practice of Charity, then, whether Temporal or Spiritual, all Christians have it in their power, to make an Interest, for being receiv'd into the Eternal Tabernacles, by the assistance of others Prayers. And this is an admirable expedient of the Divine Goodness, for uniting Christians together by the Commerce of Charity, Their mutual Necessities make

a mutual Dependance: If the Poor have need of the Rich, to contribute to their Subſiſtance; the Rich have need of the Poor, for obtaining the Grace and Mercies of God, And yet this ought not to be a Motive, for applying Charity to thoſe only among the Poor, who being reputed Virtuous, are likely to pray for their Benefactors: For where Neceſſities are moſt preſſing, there Charity is firſt to be applied; and if theſe happen to be upon Perſons, whoſe Ingratitude or Averſion gives little hopes of their Prayers, yet God will ſupply, by his Goodneſs, what is wanting in them, who will not conſider what they do, but what they ought to do for ſuch as give them relief.

Thus Chriſt inſtructs the Faithful, how they may prevent all the Miſchiefs of their paſt ill Management. But ſince he complains here in the Concluſion of this Goſpel, that the Children of Darkneſs are wiſer in their Generation, than the Children of Light, in being more induſtrious in providing againſt the Dangers that threaten; ſince we ſee this daily verified, in the labours of Worldly Men; ſo that they would certainly be great Saints, did they take as much pains for their Eternal Well-being, as they do for the Eſtabliſhment of their Fortune; this Reproach of

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our Redeemer ought to condemn our ſlothful Indifferency, and put us upon Reſolutions of being more Induſtrious in the Concerns of Eternity, and particularly in making uſe of the Means, he is ſo Mercifully pleas'd to recommend. Let this Mercy, I beſeech thee, O Jeſus, move us; let the Weight of Eternity force us on; and having a daily Reproach before our Eyes, in the Sollicitude of Worldly Souls, let us timely provide, as thou haſt taught us, againſt Everlaſting Poverty; that, if we cannot give a good account, we may at leaſt thus be prepar'd againſt the Miſchiefs of our ill Stewardſhip.

Ninth Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL.

Luke C. 19. V. 41. ends V. 47.

AS *Jeſus drew near, ſeeing the City, he wept over it.* Our Paſſions being the general Occaſion of Sin, Chriſt, in his own Perſon, has taught us a better uſe of them, even ſuch, as may help us in our Way to Heaven. Being provok'd by the Prophaneneſs of thoſe, who Traffick'd in the Temple, he has ſhewn us, that only

Sin

Sin ought to be the Object of our Anger. Being ſenſible of the Fear of Death, he has taught us, in all our Fears and Weakneſſes, to ſubmit to the Will of God, and to give his Holy Will the Preference to the Natural Deſire we ever have of being exempt from Temporal Evils. In earneſtly deſiring to accompliſh his Baptiſm, that is, his Paſſion, and to eat the laſt Paſſover with his Diſciples, he has pointed to us, what ought to be the Object of our Deſires: And now being mov'd with Compaſſion, and Weeping over *Jeruſalem*, he inſtructs us, what it is principally, that ought to excite our Grief. He ſaw the City, and being ſenſible of the Blindneſs of the Jews, of their Contempt of the Graces, that were offer'd, of their Neglecting the Opportunities of finding Mercy, and foreſeeing the Deſtruction, that was falling upon them, in puniſhment of their Obſtinacy, he therefore laments their Miſery, and expreſſes his Grief in Tears; Tears very different from thoſe of Men, who weep for Paſſion, Intereſt, Weakneſs, Self-Love and Hypocriſie: But the Tears of Chriſt are Holy and Sanctifying, Tears of Religion, and Zeal for the Glory of God, and which make a part of his Sacrifice; Tears of Compaſſion and Charity for Sinners; Tears of Contrition and

and Penance for Sin; Tears of Inſtruction and Comfort for Penitents.

Such Grief as this, is Chriſtian Grief, juſtified, approv'd and ſanctified in their Head: And have not Chriſtians reaſon to mix their Tears with their Head, when they conſider the greateſt part of the World, buried in Infidelity, the Believing part torn with Schiſms, the Orthodox part diſfigur'd with the Vices of Heathens; when they ſee a univerſal Corruption Authoriz'd amongſt the Profeſſors of the Goſpel, and, in this Point, no Veil of Diſtinction betwixt the People and the Altar? This Blindneſs of Miſtaken Chriſtians, and Obſtinacy of the Vicious, with the Conſideration of God, whom they offend, and the Eternal Miſery; into which they unthinkingly run, is enough to provoke Tears from the Eyes of Chriſtians; and there is nothing but the narrowneſs of Human Spirit, which, diverted by preſent Objects from thinking of their own and others Miſery, is the reaſon of their not being daily conſum'd with Grief.

And ſince, thro' our want of Faith, and our Stupidity, we ſeldom reflect ſo much on our own Unhappineſs, or that of our Fellow-members, as to let theſe draw Tears from us, but if we weep at all, it is

is for what deſerves not our Tears; we have reaſon to beg of Jeſus, this Day, that he would give us a true Senſe of our Miſery, and teach us to weep as Chriſtians and Penitents, not for what is taken from our Paſſions, or for thoſe Evils, which paſs with time, and may be more our advantage, than our loſs; but for the unhappy ſtate of Sinners, for our hatred to Sin, the only real Evil, and for the loſs of his Grace and his Love, the only real Goods. And let us ask too, that he would teach all Prieſts, to weep as Prieſts, and Religious to weep as Religious, that is, upon a lively Senſe of the Intereſt of God, to lament the Evils of the Church, and the Blindneſs of Sinners, and by Tears, reſembling thoſe of Chriſt, endeavour to move the Father of Mercies to have Compaſſion on all thoſe, who, blinded by Sin, ſee not their own Miſery.

This it was Chriſt principally lamented in the Jews; and therefore he ſighs over *Jeruſalem*; Ah, if thou didſt but know in this thy Day, what is for thy peace! But now all this is hid from thy Eyes. This is the great Concern of Sinners, to know the Time and Ways of Salvation. Their greateſt Misfortune is not, in being Sinners, but in not knowing their Sins, and

the Remedies of them, and in rejecting those Means, which God offers for their help. All Sinners have their Day, as *Jerusalem* had, in which, if they would consider, what is for their Peace, and give ear to those Visits, which God makes them, it is not to be doubted, but he, who wills not the Death of a Sinner, would receive them into favour, and prevent those Judgments, which are falling upon them. But if they let this their Day pass over, without making any Advantage of the offer'd Mercy, what must they then see, but the Days of Justice and Revenge? Here then is the great Blindness of Sinners, to prefer that false Peace, which they find in Sin, in their Passions, and in the Satisfactions of the present Life, before the more solid Peace of Penance and the Cross.

This is the Blindness, from which we are daily to beseech God to deliver us, that the Means of Salvation, and Ways of Peace, may not be hid from our Eyes, We are at present in this Day of Peace, and there are none of us, whatever our guilt be, can pretend, that God does not call upon us, to for sake our Evil Ways, and accept of Mercy. This he does sufficiently in this present Gospel; and does he not this at other times, by his Ministers and

and holy Books, by Examples of Virtue, which he preſents to us, by Inſpirations, which enlighten and touch our Hearts, by Afflictions, in which he puniſhes our Diſorders, by particular Occaſions, which he offers of working out our Salvation, in doing Charities to our Neighbour, protecting the Innocent, and ſuccouring the Afflicted? Does not Jeſus Chriſt preſent himſelf, in all theſe Ways, viſiting us, as he did *Jeruſalem*, putting into our Hands the Price of our Salvation, and pointing out to us the Way, by which we may come to it? And what have we to do for effecting it, but to acknowledge the Mercy of his Viſits, and reſolutely to undertake what he propoſes.

Thus are we all at preſent in the Day of Peace, and in Circumſtances of laying the Foundation of an Eternal Peace: But if we neglect the Opportunity, now offer'd, and, like the Jews, are deaf to all the Calls of Mercy, who can ſecure us of another Viſit from Heaven? Who can promiſe, that God will again call upon us, or that the rigour of his Juſtice will not ſucceed this Mercy? The Jews were as ſecurely confident, as we can be, when they were ſurpriz'd with unheard of Judgments, ſuch as awaken'd them to Confuſion, but not to Repentance: And

how many poor Souls, are now irrecoverably loſt, who deſpiſing the offers of a Merciful God inviting to Repentance, ſlept on under a falſe Security, till the Divine Juſtice open'd their Eyes to ſee their Folly, but without place for Amendment? And will not this be the Fate of all thoſe, who knowing not what is for their Peace, and having the Means of Salvation hid from them, walk on as ſecurely in their Evil Ways, as if the Meaſure of Life was in their own Hands, and they could command the Grace of a true Converſion, whenever they pleas'd?

There is too much reaſon to fear, this will be their Lot; and hence I cannot but apprehend, that this unhappy Iſſue has been in many the Puniſhment of their Preſumption or Neglect. Firſt, In numbers of thoſe, who have been unhappily Educated under the Deluſion of Errors, and when God has mercifully put them in Circumſtances of being enlightned, nay, and by ſufficient Glimpſes of Light, call'd upon them to open their Eyes, have either wholly neglected this offer, or being prevail'd on by Temporal Conſiderations, to put by this Buſineſs to a more ſeaſonable time, have never more found that time, but have been unfortunately ſurpriz'd by ſuch Sickneſs, as has render'd them

them uncapable of then doing, what they neglected in Health, and have died in their Errors.

Secondly, In many, who have been brought up in Ignorance, and tho' not erring in Faith, have yet ſuch an imperfect Senſe of their practical Duties, that their Faith appears not in their Life: And how many of theſe, neglecting the Means of better Inſtruction, when they have been offer'd, have afterwards met with Temptations above their Strength, and thro' a faulty Weakneſs, been drawn into Vice or Error?

Thirdly, In infinite Numbers, who engag'd in Vice, but with Thoughts of Amendment, have put by the Motions of Heaven, declin'd the Viſits of thoſe, whoſe Charity God excited for their help, and afterwards have either never met with the like offers, or come at length to deſpiſe, what they at firſt neglected. How often has the ſame happen'd to ſtill infinite others, who often touch'd with the Senſe of their Diſorders, of ill Cuſtoms, of Omiſſions, of Sloth, *&c.* have as often reſolv'd upon entring upon a new Method, but finding Reaſons for Delays, have been in them cut off in Puniſhment of their Neglect? Thus are we bound to acknowledge in others the ſad Effects of deſpis'd

Mercies; grant, O God, that this may not be our Sin, but that we may have our Hearts ever open to thee, to receive the Benefit of the Visits of thy Grace and Goodness, that so taking the Advantage of the present, we may truly apply our selves to the things, that are for our Peace, and so prevent those Judgments, which, we confess, are due to our Sins.

Tenth Sunday *after* Pentecost.

GOSPEL,

Luke C. 18. V. 9. ends. V. 14.

JEsus *spoke this Parable to some, who confided in themselves as just, and despis'd others.* And the Parable is of the *Pharisee* and *Publican*, who went up to the Temple to Pray: In which are drawn Two Characters by the hand of Jesus Christ; the one of Mistaken Justice, in the Person of the *Pharisee*; the other of True Repentance, in the Person of the *Publican*, and these deserve the Consideration of all Christians, whose great Intereſt it is to avoid the one, and be sollicitous for the other.

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The *Phariſee* is here deſcrib'd, as wholly taken up with the Thoughts of his own Juſtice; his Virtue ſeems to him Pure, and without Mixture. He is ſenſible of no Wounds in his Soul, which ſhould oblige him to have recourſe to the Heavenly Phyſician; he ſees in himſelf no Sins, for which he ſhould ask Pardon of God. Hence his Pride being without Check, a Preſumptuous Confidence fills his Soul, and this is the Diſpoſition, with which he comes to Prayer. There is no ſtate more dangerous for a Chriſtian, than to ſee nothing in himſelf but Virtue, becauſe he is not capable of bearing ſuch a Proſpect, without loſing himſelf; and therefore 'tis nothing leſs than a Mercy in God, to permit us to be ſubject to Failings and Miſeries, and to put them often before our Eyes, that ſo our Pride may have always a Counterpoize, ſuch as may keep the Soul in a ſtate of perpetual Humiliation; and if there be any, who ſee them not, there can be no other reaſon, but becauſe ſuch are blinded by Self-Love, and ſee not themſelves, but in that Glaſs, which Pride holds to them.

The Miſcarriage of this *Phariſee* preſenting himſelf thus before God, is enough to make Chriſtians fearful of the like diſorder. The greateſt number can ſcarce

be apprehended as in danger of it, becauſe their daily Sins look them ſo full in the Face, that they muſt be doubly blind, if they are proud of their Virtues, and ſee nothing at the ſame time to confound this Pride. And as for others, tho' there are every where Failings enough, which, one would think, might be Security againſt this Evil; yet ſince Self-love is ſo very partial in putting a blind on that ſide, and even thoſe, who ſometimes ſee nothing in themſelves, but what inclines them to Deſpair, at other times put ſuch a favourable Conſtruction on all within them, as to preſume, with this *Phariſee*, that they ſtand not in need of Mercy: Therefore, I think, the Motives of Fear and Humiliation are neceſſary for all, that while Chriſtians take pains in ſatisfying their Duty, they may be provided againſt the Aſſaults of Pride, and not loſe the Benefit of all they do.

Their great Art then muſt be, in giving a Check to all Preſuming Thoughts, by rendring even their Virtue ſuſpected. And may not this eaſily be? For what if they can ſay, with the *Phariſee*, that they are neither Thieves, Unjuſt or Adulterers? This may be true, that they have never done the outward Actions of theſe Crimes, but can they ſay with Aſſurance, that

that they have never incurr'd the Guilt of them? A Paſſing Conſent is enough to render us Criminals before God; and who can poſitively pronounce of themſelves in a Caſe, where the ſubtilty of Thought mixes all with ſo much Uncertainty and Darkneſs? This Uncertainty then put into the Ballance againſt all appearance of Virtue, may moderate all Inclinations to Preſumption with a ſeaſonable Fear; it being permitted for this end by Providence, that ſo all Exceſs of Confidence in our ſelves might be prevented.

Again, If Chriſtians have declin'd the Ways of Sin, and been exempt from Vice; are they certain, they have done this for the love of Juſtice, and upon the Motive of doing the Will of God? May not all this have been the Effect of Pride, for gaining Reputation with Men? May it not have been the Fruit of Fear, or Shame, or of Self-love, ſeeking the Satiſfaction of conſidering themſelves juſt, and not like other Men? The outward Actions are no more than the Bark or Shell; 'tis the Motive of acting gives the Spirit and Life; and as long as Chriſtians are not aſſur'd, that a ſecret Corruption has not tainted what they have done, they have ſtill grounds to ſuſpect, and not confide in themſelves.

Thirdly, If what they have done, be ſuppos'd pure and unmix'd; yet what grounds for preſent Confidence are ſuch Virtues, if at preſent they do not ſubſiſt? And can they be poſitive in this? One wilful Sin, whether Corporal or Spiritual is enough to Overthrow all; and how many ſuch Sins are there, which are almoſt imperceptible; as the Abuſe of the Divine Grace, Ingratitude, Envy, Raſh Judgment, Want of Charity? If therefore they give Thanks for not having part in the Scandalous Corruptions of the World; yet this muſt be accompanied with an humble Fear, leſt by ſecret Sins they have rendred themſelves unworthy in the ſight of God.

Fourthly, Since all the Graces, which Chriſtians receive, is with an Obligation of making an improvement of them, and daily to advance in good, a want of Aſſurance here, is enough to oblige them to a perpetual diſtruſt of themſelves. It is what has made the greateſt Saints always little in their own Eyes: And who then can dare to preſume, as long as they are under this Uncertainty?

Laſtly, If Chriſtians, by the help of Grace, have done well, are not they ſtill in want of New Grace to perſever in good? And may not they, for want of

This

This, eaſily fall from whatever degree of Virtue they have hitherto gain'd? If therefore they have nothing elſe to keep them humble, is not the Senſe of their Weakneſs, which muſt be ſupported by new Succours, enough to make them dependent on God, to fear themſelves, and with humility to ſeek for his help?

None of theſe humbling Thoughts occur'd to the *Phariſee*, and therefore his Pride being at full liberty, takes Poſſeſſion of his Heart, makes him confide in himſelf as Juſt, deſpiſe others, and ask nothing of God: Hence he is rejected by Heaven; and while he preſumes himſelf Rich in Virtue and Grace, is declar'd to have none.

But now, if we turn to the *Publican*, we find him taking quite another Method; he has a true Senſe of his Unworthineſs and Sins; and therefore, tho' he ventures to come into the Temple of God, yet he ſtands afar off at diſtance from the Altar, he dares not look to Heaven, but ſtriking his Breaſt, cries out, God be merciful to me a Sinner. All is Humility in him; and this join'd with a Confidence in God, obtains that Mercy, which he ſeeks. Where there is the true Spirit of Repentance, this will give Penitents ſuch a ſenſible Conviction of their

Misery, as, without any other Sentence, to judge themselves unworthy of all Favours; and therefore, not only to submit with Peace, when the Participation of the Sacred Mysteries is forbid them for a time, that they may prepare for the more worthy approaching to them; but likewise to pass this Sentence on themselves, that so the Sense of their unworthiness making a stronger impression in their Souls, they may be more fearful of relapsing, and move God to Compassion by this Humility.

As Humility is the Effect of true Repentance, so likewise is Hope; and therefore the *Publican* turning to God, and petitioning for Mercy, shews all Penitents, what they ought to do. Grief for Sin without Hope, is Confusion and Despair, but not Repentance. Nothing is more injurious to God, than to set Bounds to his Mercy, and to suppose his Hatred against Sinners inflexible. He hates Sin, but he cannot hate the Sinner, any longer than the Sin subsists in him, if therefore his Heart be truely Converted from Sin, he ought to have Confidence in God; for this Conversion being an Effect of God's Love, 'tis unreasonable to think, he cannot obtain of him Pardon for Sin, of whom he has already obtain'd the change of his Heart.

With

With theſe Diſpoſitions then of Humility, Sorrow and Hope, the *Publican* came to the Temple, and return'd home juſtified. With the ſame ought every Sinner to preſent himſelf before God, who deſires the ſame Mercy. Deliver us, O God, from all Preſumption and vain Confidence in our ſelves; lead us into all Good; but make us ever ſenſible, there can be no true Virtue, where there is not true Humility; let this accompany us at all times, but more eſpecially, when we come to the Temple to pray; and let a firm Hope be join'd with this, when we ask for Mercy, that we may be thus deliver'd from the Guilt of our Sins, and with the *Publican*, return juſtified.

Eleventh Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL,

Mark C. 7. V. 31. to the end.

They bring to Jeſus one deaf and dumb, and beſeech him to lay his Hand upon him. Jeſus could have Cur'd this Man by his Word, or by touching him, as was deſir'd:

ſir'd: But inſtead of this, ſee what the Goſpel relates; He took him apart from the multitude, put his Finger into his Ears, with his Spittle touch'd his Tongue, he look'd up to Heaven, ſigh'd, and then ſaid to him, *Ephpheta*, that is be thou open'd; upon which the Man was reſtor'd to His Hearing and Speech, and ſpoke well. In which Actions Chriſt gives Authority to all thoſe Ceremonies, which, by his Example, the Church has at all times us'd in the Adminiſtration of Baptiſm, which, however ſubject to the Rāileries of Ignorance, and excepted againſt as Unneceſſary and Unprofitable, are here both juſtified and ſanctified. And have not here the Miniſters of Chriſt their Model, for being Men of Deſires, of Prayer, and of Sighs; that when they exerciſe their Function, and perform the Ceremonies of the Sacraments and Sacrifice, and pronounce Words and Prayers over Sinners, in the Name and Authority of Jeſus Chriſt; they ought to raiſe up their Hearts to Heaven, ſighing for thoſe whom they have under their Hands, and entirely depending on his Bleſſing, who is the Maſter of Hearts.

Have not here again all Chriſtians ſufficient reaſon to apprehend the danger of all thoſe Diſtempers, which affect the Ears

Ears and the Tongue, and to conſider the difficulty of their Cure? For ſince all thoſe Ceremonies were not neceſſary for the Cure of the Man, that was brought before Chriſt, they have reaſon to underſtand them, as Inſtructions given to them; not to look on thoſe Evils, as inconſiderable in themſelves, or eaſie in their Remedy, which here in their Figure only, ſeem'd to demand, not only the Word, but the Labour of Chriſt, and the whole Power of Heaven for their Relief.

Ought not then every one, on this Day, conſider the Diſtempers of theſe two Faculties of Hearing and Speaking, and then ſee, if they are ſo far concern'd in them, as to ſtand in need of his help, who was the Phyſician of this Poor Man? 'Tis one Diſtemper of Hearing, to be pleas'd with Prophane or Irreligious Diſcourſe, another to be ſatisfied with what entrenches upon Modeſty, another to have the Ears open to Detraction, another to be delighted with Flattery, another to admit of Whiſperers, and thoſe who are Informers of the Secrets of other Families. 'Tis another general Diſtemper, to be greedy of all worldly Entertainments, ſuch as afford proper Matter for ſtrengthing all Paſſions, ſuch as are grateful to Vanity, Ambition, Envy, Senſuality, ſuch as link the

Soul

Soul faſter to Earth, and give it a diſlike of all, that is Edifying or Inſtructive. The Diſtempers of the Tongue are too well known to need here a particular Liſt, becauſe this Member publiſhes its own Diſorders, in Swearing, Curſing, Prophaneſs, Abuſing God's Holy Name, in Lying, Backbiting, Filthy Words, Diſcourſes and Jeſts, in Animoſities, Quarrels, making Diviſions, and concurring to all manner of Evils, and being generally buſied in recommending and magnifying thoſe things of the World, which ought moſt to be deſpis'd.

There's no glancing at theſe Evils, but they appear ſo numerous and ſpreading, that 'tis ſcarce a queſtion, whether any be wholly exempt from them; but however, they are not our preſent Concern, who accidentally, by ſurprize or overſight, fall under ſome of their Guilt; for what is a paſſing Accident, cannot be call'd a Diſeaſe. But ſuch other Chriſtians are here in particular call'd upon, who obſerve themſelves under the Cuſtom of any of theſe Evils; for ſuch a Cuſtom betraying a ſettl'd Diſorder in them, 'tis an evident Argument of their being in want of a good Phyſicians help; and if they had any Friends, I think theſe would direct them to take his Advice, who in this

Goſpel,

Goſpel, has given ſuch Demonſtration of his Goodneſs, of his Power, and of his Skill.

If they come to him, with the Poor Man here mention'd, and demand his help, he does not, with his Word, command away their Evil, but taking them by the Hand, leads them into a better Air; he will not have them breath in a Croud, but ſets them at a diſtance, where with more freedom of Spirit they may attend to his Preſcriptions, and the Method of their Cure. The World is ſo Corrupt, that there is no ill Cuſtom, but what is juſtified by Example, and there needs no more, to be led out of the way, than to do what others do. The Vicious have here the Encouragement of others like themſelves; and the Failings or Overſights of ſuch as are reputed Good, are taken up for a Rule, by thoſe who have not Courage to do amiſs, but by Example. Whence there are few, who being either check'd by the Doubts of their own Conſcience, or reprov'd by others, but preſently ſhelter themſelves under this Salvo, That ſuch others do the ſame. And is it not here, that many Evils find Protection; as Detraction, Lying, Prophaning God's Holy Name, Uncharitableneſs, Animoſities, Quarrels, and many Practices, which

which are Fraudulent and Unjuſt? Is it not by this deceitful Argument are kept up, as Innocent, all the Methods of Vanity, Prodigality, Ambition, Covetouſneſs, Intemperance, and all the Ways of a Diſſipated, Idle, and Unprofitable Life? Is it not by the ſame, the Goſpel is grown out of Faſhion; and to pretend to live up to its Maxims, is enough to be cenſur'd for Bigotry, and to be pointed at as a Mark of Reproach.

This certainly is the State of the Chriſtian World, ſo that whoever thinks of following it, will never learn to ſpeak or hear aright. 'Tis no wonder then, Chriſt took this Man out of the Croud, that was to be Cur'd; for tho' this was not neceſſary for him, who could as eaſily, even there have reſtor'd him to his Senſes; yet it was a neceſſary Inſtruction for all thoſe, who, lying under the like Infirmities, ſhould in ſucceeding Ages deſire to be Cur'd. And the Inſtruction is this; That the Common Ways of the World being Corrupt, they are bound to withdraw from them; and by conſidering, in Retirement of Spirit, the Ways of Chriſt, learn from him, how to Hear and Speak.

But if they obſerve this Preſcription, they muſt ſtill remember, 'tis by the Finger of God, that is, by his Holy Spirit, they

they are to receive their Cure. They are to uſe Human Means, as in Reading, Adviſing, and keeping a Watch upon themſelves; but no Effect can be expected from theſe, if the Operation of the Holy Spirit be not join'd with them, in changing their Hearts, and, by powerful Impreſſions of Grace, giving them a Conſtancy of Mind, by which they may be confirm'd againſt all the Temptations of their own Weakneſs, and of the World.

As therefore they ſee Chriſt in working this Miracle, lifting up his Eyes to Heaven, and ſighing, ſo they may be aſſur'd, this Grace of the Holy Spirit is not to be obtain'd but by Prayers and Sighs; and that if they do not thus manifeſt the true Senſe they have of their Misfortune, and the ſincere Deſire of being deliver'd from it, they are ſtill likely to lye under their Diſtemper. Chriſt wanted none of theſe helps; and whatever he did of this kind, was only to inform us, what we are to do. And therefore, as for thoſe, who ſeemingly deſire Remedy of their Spiritual Evils, and only make this the Subject of paſſing Thoughts. and of ſome Cuſtomary Prayers, in which the Senſe of their Misfortune is ſo little, that they are ſcarce ſenſible of what they ask, I am certain, they are not taught thus by Chriſt;

and

and I fear, as they depart from his Example, and the Preſcriptions of this their Phyſician, ſo there can be little hopes of their Amendment from ſuch imperfect Endeavours. Teach us, O God, to be ſenſible of the Diſtempers of our Soul, and now more eſpecially of our Ears and Tongue; and ſince thou haſt ſhew'd us the Method of our Cure, give us Grace to practiſe it, that following thy Directions, we may have juſt hopes of Amendment; for, we know, that Hope is groundleſs, when we expect thy Grace, and go on ſtill in our own Ways, and not in thine.

Twelfth Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL,

Luke C. 10. V. 23. ends V. 37.

MAſter, *What ſhall I do to obtain Life Everlaſting?* This Queſtion was propos'd to Chriſt by a Doctor of the Law. I wiſh all of his Profeſſion would ask the ſame Queſtion; becauſe they have ſo much Encouragement to Injuſtice, and ſo much Intereſt in Oppreſſion, that they are in

in perpetual hazard of putting the next Life to the venture, to be Gainers in this. And here is one great part of their Misfortune, that, as this Doctor of the Law, knew it his Duty, to love God above all things, and his Neighbour as himſelf, yet did not know, who his Neighbour was: So theſe, tho' they may have a general Senſe of what is due to God, and their Neighbour, yet they ſeldom know, who their Neighbour is; being ever ready to keep open the Wounds of the Miſerable, and encreſe the Burthen of the Oppreſs'd; if any are ſuch ill Chriſtians, as to make them Gainers by this Inhumanity; and not only ſo, but likewiſe, by ſtudied delays, to prolong their Misfortune, whom they undertake to help. This is ſo far from the Practice of what Chriſt recommends in this Goſpel, that whatever their Belief be who live under the guilt of it, I fear, they never ask the Queſtion, What they ſhall do, to obtain Life Everlaſting? But rather ſeem to have renounc'd all hopes of it: For that being a Kingdom of Juſtice, Truth, and Mercy, how are they in the Way to it, who are ever prepar'd, upon the Encouragement of a Fee, to undertake any Cauſe, even when Innocence, Truth and Juſtice ſtand evident againſt them

them? Thus they do not know their Neighbour, but themſelves only.

And I fear, 'tis not ſo in their Caſe, but that all other Profeſſions are to be ſuſpected. For tho' being induſtrious in gaining a Livelihood, be not only commendable, but Duty; yet when I conſider, how Covetouſneſs, and the immoderate deſire of Gain, put the Profeſſors upon many unwarrantable Methods, that Frauds, Counterfeits, and Injuſtice, are generally mix'd with all they do; ſo that every Shop, that is open, is become like a Trap to catch the Ignorant, or the unwary; and thoſe, that ſtand in them, ſeem to wait for thoſe, whom they may over-reach or deceive; here I cannot, but apprehend, they know not, who their Neighbour is, and that being ever ready to do to others, what they would have no others do to them, they are unaquainted with this Precept of Charity, which obliges them to love their Neighbour as themſelves.

'Tis very likely, they are perſwaded, they cannot otherwiſe live, and be provided with preſent Neceſſaries, or againſt future Caſualties, and therefore, that Neceſſity is their Warrant. But if they bring the Method of their Lives to the Teſt of the Goſpel, will they then tell me, that their Neceſſities are not of their own making

king? Will it not then appear, that 'tis not the Neceſſities of Life, but their Intemperance, Gluttony, Ambition, Pride, Envy, *&c.* that put them upon theſe unjuſtifiable Ways for their ſupport? But if the Sollicitude for Life were really their Temptation, ought not they to break the force of this, by reflecting, that they have another Life to provide for, as well as this? Ought not they to ask, with this Lawyer, What they are to do, to gain Life Eternal, as well as, how to live here; and thus give a Check to all thoſe Suggeſtions, which are for ſecuring this Life, with the loſs of the other? Certainly, thoſe, who have a true Faith in God, ought likewſe to have ſo much Hope in him, that if, in Obedience to his Law, and for the Love of Juſtice, they renounce ſo much of their preſent Intereſt, as is the Fruit of Injuſtice, he will give a Bleſſing to their more moderate Gain, ſuch as will carry them thro' the Difficulties of this Life, and be their ſubſtantial Comfort at the Hour of Death, when they ſhall have a proſpect of Treaſures laid up in Heaven, by all the unlawful Advantages they have renounc'd, and the Inconveniencies they have ſuffer'd, rather than offend againſt Juſtice, and tranſgreſs that Precept of Charity, which obliges

liges them to love their Neighbour, as themſelves, and never to advance themſelves by wronging him.

But this Obligation is not confin'd to theſe Profeſſions; all that hope for Eternal Life, are bound to ſeek it by the Love of God, and of their Neighbour; and becauſe the former is beſt manifeſted By the latter, therefore it is the Common Intereſt of all, to know who there Neighbour is, that ſo they may ſatisfie the Obligation of loving him, and have that great Argument of the Love of God abiding in them. To anſwer this Queſtion in general, Chriſt has here propos'd the Parable of the Man who falling among Thieves, and being wounded by them, was paſs'd by unregarded by the Prieſt and Levite, and was help'd by the Samaritan, who compaſſionating his Misfortune took care of him; In which he has taught us, that to Chriſtians, it is not nearneſs of Dwelling or Blood, nor Acquaintance, nor Affection, nor Friendſhip, nor Dependance, makes Neighbours, but that they are to eſteem all their Neighbours, who are in want of their help, and whom they are any ways capable helping. Whence the Poor are always to be eſteem'd Neighbours by the Rich, the Sick by thoſe in Health, the Priſoner by the Free, the Ignorant

norant by the Learned, the Afflicted and Comfortleſs by ſuch as are in Peace of Mind, the Erring Chriſtians by thoſe who are in the Way of Truth, and the Sinner by the Juſt. And as the Samaritan, upon ſeeing the Diſtreſs of the Perſon before him, preſently ran in to his Aſſiſtance, without asking Queſtions, Who he was; Or what Place or Religion? So all Chriſtians, upon the Conviction of others wanting their help, ought to contribute to it, without farther enquiry; for that their Neceſſities ſhew them to be their Neighbours; and there can be no other Proof of the Love of their Neighbour being in them, than by concurring, according to their preſent Abilities to their preſent Wants. And tho' this be call'd Charity, yet there is ſomething of Juſtice in it, in as much as Man, being endebted to God, ſo that all is his due: God has ſubſtituted our Neighbour in his place, with a power of claiming what belongs to him; this Claim he puts in, when his Neceſſities are manifeſted to us; then it is he demands his Right if not upon his own Account, at leaſt, upon that deputation, which God has given him. Whence Compaſſion becomes a Debt, and not an arbitrary Service; and there needs no more than to be miſerable

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to have a Right to the Compaſſion of others, and to what help they can give. And thus, Chriſtians, by helping their Neighbour, diſcharge that Debt, which they owe to God; and to remove all Doubts on this Account, Chriſt has already ſign'd a General Acquittance, wherein he owns the Receipt, of all, that has been thus given. *Whatever you have done to any of theſe little ones, you have done to me.*

Chriſt having thus poſitively declar'd, who our Neighbour is, and as poſitively in what manner we are to expreſs our Love to him, and then concluding his Inſtruction with this Command, *Vade & tu fac ſimiliter: Go, and do thus*: He has in this given direction to Chriſtians, what his Will, and their Duty is, and ſo expreſly ſhewn the Neceſſity of practiſing this part of Charity, that it cannot be apprehended, how they can have hopes of Happineſs, who are not Sollicitous in the practice of it.

Thoſe, who have any part of this Solliciture, cannot but ſee, that Compaſſion is the firſt Diſpoſition towards it, and therefore, nothing being more diſagreable to the Chriſtian Temper, than Hard-heartedneſs, Roughneſs, and to have no Senſe of others Misfortunes: that no Chriſtians ought to tolerate this in themſelves, and much

much leſs bear with the leaſt Signs of it in their Children, or ſuch as are under their Care; for that this growing up and ſtrengthning with Years, will make them intollerably in love with themſelves, and careleſs of all others; and how then are they likely to be charitably Zealous in helping their Neighbour in his Misfortunes who know not what Compaſſion is, and are not touch'd with any Miſery, which they feel not themſelves? As this then is to be diſcountenanc'd, ſo likewiſe all Contempt of Perſons in Affliction, or Poverty, all Harſhneſs to the Poor: And how much more, all the Suggeſtions of Envy, Hatred and Malice, by which Chriſtians inſtead of Helping, are the Contrivers of their Neighbours misfortunes? Much more there is of this kind, quite oppoſite to the Spirit of Charity, and yet ſo frequent amonſt thoſe, who know, there can be no Salvation, where there is not Charity, that we have reaſon to pray for others, and ſuſpect our ſelves, who are ever Ingenious in deceiving our own Souls, and finding Reaſons for diſpenſing with this Precept, which will admit of no Exception. Leave us not, O God, to our own falſe Reas'ning in this Point, but as thou haſt ſhewn us, both who is our Neighbour, and how we are to love him, and

the Neceſſity of loving him; ſo give us Grace to practiſe it, that we may ſuppreſs all thoſe Paſſions, which put us upon being injurious to our Neighbour, and learn to love him, as we do our ſelves, by being ever fearful of doing harm, and deſirous of doing him good.

Thirteenth Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL,

Luke C. 17. V. 11. ends V. 19.

JEſus entring into a certain Village, Ten Lepers met him, who ſtood afar off. In theſe Ten unhappy Men united in one Body by one common Miſery, we may conſider the general Union there is amongſt Sinners, thro' the conformity of their Evil Inclinations. For tho' theſe are divided by worldly Intereſt, as often as they oppoſe one another's Pretenſions, yet there are other Reaſons, which link them together: As, Firſt, In the Perſecution of thoſe, who are better than themſelves, and to whom they find a like Averſion. Secondly, Becauſe the Lives of more

more Exemplar Perſons are a Reproach to their Diſorders, upon which they decline ſuch Company, and ſeek others, who being equally Criminal, can be no occaſion to them of ſuch Confuſion. Thirdly, Becauſe they mutually ſupport and ſtrengthen one another in their Paſſions, and thus ſtifle that remorſe, which often makes them uneaſie amidſt their Wickedneſs.

Upon ſuch Motives, we ſee unexemplar Chriſtians as ſtrictly aſſociated, and united in Bodies, and by Rules governing their Irregularities, as better Chriſtians are by the Bonds of Charity and Faith; and 'tis by ſuch miſplac'd Union, they not only preſerve themſelves, but likewiſe become ſo powerful, as eaſily to gain the unwary to their Party, and change the Averſion of many Innocent Perſons, into an Approbation and Love of their moſt unwarrantable Practices. And this I find ſo general a Snare, and the Method by which the beſt Diſpoſitions are corrupted, and not only Reſolutions, but Virtue is often overthrown, that I cannot but judge it the moſt neceſſary Point of Practical Wiſdom, both for Beginners, Proficients, and the moſt advanc'd in good, to be Sollicitous in the Choice of their Company, and never to make thoſe their Confi-

dents, whoſe Vice, Weakneſſes, or undiſciplin'd Life, can put them in hazard of ſinking below that Perfection, which the Goſpel requires for their Salvation.

This Wiſdom the Chriſtian is taught by the Spirit of God, who ſollicitous for his Eternal Good, calls thus upon him; Son, if Sinners invite thee, yeild not to them, walk not with them, ſet not thy Foot in their Paths, for their Feet run into Evil: Be not pleas'd in the Ways of the Wicked; turn away, flee and forſake them. This he is taught by the ſame Holy Spirit, who, by *Moſes*, publiſh'd a Law, ſtrictly forbidding the Iſraelites to Contract Friendſhip with the Inhabitants of the Land, or to touch any unclean thing. And is not this the Inſtruction given by St. *Paul*, to all the Faithful? *Brethren, we declare to you, in the Name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that you withdraw your ſelves from every Brother, that walks diſorderly, and not according to the Tradition they have receiv'd from us.* In infinite other places is the like Advice given to the Profeſſors of the Goſpel; and the deſign of it being in Charity to their Souls, for preventing that Ruin, they would otherwiſe draw upon themſelves' it muſt be by Conſequence, that all ſuch, as are ſincerely deſirous to ſave their Souls, muſt obſerve the Preſcription,

ſcription, in being very Cautious in the choice of their Friendſhip and Converſation, and not leave that to Inclination, which is both Blind and Lame, on which Eternity ſo much depends.

Whence it is very evident, all thoſe muſt be Charg'd with great Indiſcretion, who, upon any Change of Place or Abode, are forward in ſettling a Friendſhip with ſuch, in whom they find a preſent agreeableneſs, before they have had ſufficient Experience for the Trial of their Principles: Since 'tis moſt certain, the Flatteries of Natural Accompliſhments, or Artificial Meen, have drawn in many raſhly to confide in thoſe, who have nothing Subſtantial in them to anſwer the firſt Invitation; but by Falſeneſs, Fraud, Vice, or Indiſcretion, have brought weighty Inconveniences on their Haſty Admirers, to pay for the Folly of their Choice.

Secondly, all thoſe muſt be Arraign'd, who, after a commendable Education, being now, by the Priviledge of their Years, at liberty in the Choice of their Company, aſſociate themſelves to ſuch, whoſe Age and Ingenuity, with other Modiſh Accompliſhments, render them agreeable; but being wholly influenc'd by Principles of the World, and not of the Goſpel, are fit for nothing, but to make

their Followers Skill'd in all the Arts of Self love, Pride, Ambition, Prodigality, Senſuality, Idleneſs, and Eaſe, and to think of nothing, beyond Courting this World and themſelves. For what can be the Effect of ſuch Converſation, but to learn by Example, and let the preſent Impreſſions take place of all whatever they have been taught of good, to the Contempt of Religion, and all thoſe Exerciſes, on which their Salvation depends? This is ſo far true in Fact, that I believe there are none, but who can give ſome Inſtances of it, amongſt their Acquaintance, ſufficient to oblige thoſe to be upon the watch, who have the Charge of Youth on their Hands; and I cannot but think, that had thoſe of Youthful Years, who are now ſtepping into the World, a true information of ſuch, as, in their Circumſtances, are by the indiſcreet choice of Company, drawn into all manner of Wickedneſs, there might be hopes, the proſpect of ſo many loſt Souls, would teach them to be more Cautious, than raſhly there to expoſe themſelves, where they have ſo much Ruin before them.

Thirdly, The Method of thoſe is to be reprov'd, who entring upon the Paſtoral Charge, and having ſome general Senſe of its Difficulties, and of themſelves being not yet

yet well acquainted with its Duties, ſeek not out thoſe of their Coat for Companions, whoſe Experience has fitted them for giving them Light, and whoſe laborious Zeal may raiſe in them a deſire of following their Apoſtolick Steps; but rather enter into ſuch Clubs, where there is more to be learn'd of a Wordly than Eccleſiaſtick Spirit, and here initiating themſelves, grow in Love with an Idle and Unactive Life, and are in danger of forgetting by degrees, that they have the Charge of others Souls upon their Hands. There is ſo much of ill Management in this, that, I fear, ſome never live to recover the ill Conſequences of this firſt falſe Step. And if I here leave it, with all the Solemnity of my laſt requeſt, to all thoſe, who are to follow, That they would make a better Choice of their Company, and never prophane the Sanctity of their Undertaking, by entring into ſuch diſ-edifying Meetings; but rather ſeek out thoſe, who will give both Light and Heat; I queſtion not, but the Advantages found by thoſe, who ſhall follow the Advice, will oblige them to return me both Thanks and Prayers for my Legacy.

Laſtly, The Method of the generality of Chriſtians is to be Cenſur'd, who being ſubject to failings, are commonly indu-

ſtrious in finding out others, under whoſe Authority and Example, they make their defence againſt the Arguments of their uneaſie Conſcience, and by whoſe Converſation, they may be rather encourag'd in taking greater liberties, than reproach'd for ſuch as already deſerve it. This is the unhappy expedient, by which moſt Chriſtians confirm themſelves, if not improve in their Weakneſſes: They herd with others like themſelves, from whom they can neither fear Reproach, nor expect Advice; and thus by their ill Choice, are more in danger of growing worſe, than in Circumſtances of ever ariſing above thoſe Imperfections, which ſink them below their Duty. 'Tis by this Way the Vicious are ſtrengthen'd in their Vices, ſo as to be harden'd againſt the Advice of Friends, and the Light of Grace, with which God is pleas'd mercifully to touch them: And by the ſame is kept up that worldly Spirit, and imperfect Notion of a Chriſtian Life amongſt others, who ſenſible of the Difficulty of riſing above what they are, cannot be pleas'd with any Company, but ſuch, as know how to ridicule every Profeſſor, whoſe Life is a Reproach to theirs.

Thus, I believe, it muſt be acknowledg'd a general Truth, that Company is the

the beginning or improvement of all degrees of Evil; and that conſequently, it is a particular Point of Wiſdom, in all that are in earneſt with Salvation, to be very Cautious in the Company they chuſe. There's an Obligation of avoiding thoſe, who are Scandalouſly Vicious; and 'tis not much leſs, as to declining ſuch, by whoſe Converſation, we are likely to become leſs Chriſtians, than we are, or have that encourag'd, which is not good in us. But as for thoſe, who make Heaven their Buſineſs, they will not only go thus far, but ever be deſirous of ſuch Company, as are better than themſelves, from whoſe Inſtruction, they may be inform'd of their failings, and by Example be ſpurr'd on to the Labours neceſſary for approaching nearer to the Life of Chriſt and his Goſpel. This is the way both for Eccleſiaſticks and Laity, by which they may hope to become living Members of Chriſt's Myſtical Body, and, in their ſeveral Stations, edifie both God and Men. But as for all thoſe who either fond of their own Corruptions, or not deſirous of Amendment, decline the Converſation of ſuch, as are likely to do them good, the Buſineſs of Eternity ſeems ſo little their Concern, that I cannot but ſuſpect their Lot; and let them ſee, whether they

have not reaſon to fear, whilſt catching at all Advantages, that are for this World, they are only afraid of thoſe, which will help them to Heaven. Have Mercy, O God, on all Chriſtians, and teach them to be wiſe in this Point, that being fearful of Damnation, they may not embrace thoſe, who lead them to it, nor flee the Converſation of ſuch, as are willing to remove them from the Danger of that unhappy State, and fit them for a better.

Fourteenth Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL,

Mat. C. 6. V. 24. ends V. 33.

I *Say to you, be not Sollicitous.* Whoever reads this Goſpel, and obſerves with how many Arguments this Point is preſs'd by Chriſt to his Followers, muſt neceſſarily conclude, that Sollicitude in regard of Worldly Affairs, is a great Evil to Chriſtians, that, as ſuch, it is carefully to be avoided; and that whoever is not careful in this Point, deſpiſes not only the Advice, but Command of Chriſt, and cannot

cannot be ſuppos'd much concern'd for Salvation.

The Evil of Sollicitude is very evident, in poſſeſſing the Heart ſo much with the Concerns of this World, as to take it off from the Thoughts of a better, and render it uncapable of performing, with tolerable peace of Mind, any of thoſe Duties, which are neceſſary for preventing the Misfortune of Eternal Miſery. This is ſo well known by daily Experience, that nothing but an indifferency of Mind, as to all that is Eternal, can take of the Senſe of this Evil; and 'tis impoſſible to be generally ſubject to it, but a Perſon muſt upon this conclude himſelf moſt unhappy, if the want of Faith hides not from his Eyes the Horror of his own State.

There is a great Injuſtice in it, in letting Temporal Concerns ſo much outweigh thoſe, which are Eternal, as for the Care of a ſhort Life, to neglect all neceſſary Proviſion for that, which is to be Everlaſting. There is a kind of Infidelity in it, in not depending with due Confidence on the Providence and Goodneſs of God. There is a very great Blindneſs and Unreaſonableneſs in it, in ſeeking help ſuch a way, which can afford no help, but is ſo very contrary to whatever is propos'd, that an Enemy could adviſe

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no other, for the diſappointment of all that is deſir'd. It being moſt certain, that Sollicitude unfits a Man for that, which he is otherwiſe capable of doing; ſo that it may be truly ſaid to be an unnatural Expedient, by which we caſt a blind over our own Eyes, cut our own Sinews, tye up our Hands, and put our ſelves out of the Way, and as much act the Madmen, as thoſe, who get upon a Block to ride, or take up a Hammer to write or paint. And then, as for the Bleſſing, which is to be expected from Heaven for our Succeſs, is there not ſo much Impatience in Sollicitude, as to make us Unworthy of that help we want? And is not the Uneaſineſs under his Appointments a kind of Revolt, ſuch as is more likely to ſhut up the Treaſures of his Power and Goodneſs, than open them to our Relief? God has promis'd his help to thoſe, that put their Truſt in him, and the many Inſtances of his ſurprizing Mercies are Demonſtration, that nothing is ſo effectual in the obtaining them, as a vigorus Faith, and lively Hope in the midſt of ſuch Circumſtances, where, according to Human Reaſon, there appear no Motives, but of Deſpair. Now, if this Confidence in God be that, which moſt obliges him to our Aſſiſtance; is it not plain, that ſuch Chriſtians, as are

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in want of his help, and by their immoderate Sollicitude, ſhew that they have neither Faith in his Providence, nor Confidence in his Goodneſs, is it not plain, I ſay, that they turn God's Hand from them, and wholly unfit themſelves for receiving thoſe Succours, which an humble, ſubmiſſive Patience, and a firm Hope might have obtain'd for them.

What therefore are Chriſtians to do, amidſt the many perplexing Circumſtances of Life, ſuch as afflict for the preſent, or have horror in the proſpect of what's to come? 'Tis certain, they are bound to uſe all Diligence for remedying of preſent Evils, and ſheltring themſelves againſt ſuch Storms, as ſeem to threaten; becauſe ſuch Diligence is a Duty, 'tis the Order of Providence for Men to Labour according to the Exigenices of Life; and 'tis nothing leſs than tempting God, for Men ſo to reſt in Providence, as to ſit ſtill, without doing any thing, in confidence of ſuch a falſe Hope. The firſt Duty then, is for Chriſtians to be careful and induſtrious in all Circumſtances, and eſpecially when preſs'd with Difficulties: but then this Care muſt be Rational, that is, ſuch as may be helpful in order to obtaining the Relief deſir'd, and not a hindrance to it: Now it being moſt evident, that all immo-

immoderate Sollicitude diſcompoſes the Mind, takes off all Courage, diſtracts it with needleſs Fears, and thus renders it uncapable both of Diſcerning and Acting; whenever this Care ariſes to Sollicitude, it muſt be judg'd not Rational, and therefore not becoming a Chriſtian. But, as the Care here requir'd, is to be according to Reaſon, ſo it is likewiſe to be according to Faith; that is, muſt be regulated by ſuch Principles which Faith teaches.

Firſt, Therefore Chriſtians are to be induſtrious, in uſing the moſt proportion'd Means; and yet not ſo, as to depend on ſuch Application or Means, but on the Divine Power and Goodneſs, which are to give both Virtue aud Bleſſing to them.

Secondly, This Care is to be ſuch, that even then, when there appears little or no Hopes from Human Means, Chriſtians are ſtill to keep their Minds ballanc'd againſt Anxiety and Deſpair; by placing a firm Hope in God, with an Aſſurance of his Power being ſuch, that he has ſtill infinite ways of ſending Relief; and with a Confidence in his Goodneſs, that he, who has form'd both Body and Soul, is charg'd with the Care of preſerving them, till the time he has appointed for their Separation.

Thirdly, The Care in making Defence againſt the Evils of Life, is to be accompanied

nied with a peaceable Submiſſion to the Orders of God: So that, whether he be pleas'd to remedy the Evils, as he did in *Job*; or require the continuance of them, as he did in the Chriſtians of the firſt Three Hundred Years; or to put an End to Life by ſuch Evils, as at other times by the Sword, the Fever, or the Plague; as was the Caſe of the Primitive Martyrs, of St. *Lewis* in his Wars, and of infinite others dying under the ſeverity of their Calamities, Chriſtians are to wait with Calmneſs, expecting whatever ſhall be appointed, with a full Perſwaſion, that whatever it be, it will be beſt for them; ſince 'tis the Execution of his Orders, whoſe Infinite Wiſdom and Fatherly Goodneſs cannot fail of conſulting their Good; who thus like good Children wholly put themſelves into his Hands. In this manner are Chriſtians, in all Circumſtances, to reſt in God: And if this be done with a due dependance of Hope, it is the ſureſt Means of delivering them from all anxious Diſquiets, and of finding Peace of Mind, when there is no other Peace about them.

But with all theſe Rules, I am ſenſible, how difficult it is for ſome Tempers, to obtain any Reprieve from the perplexing Evil, which is ever as a Rack upon their

their Thoughts, in the almoſt continual Diſquiet it cauſes in them. Theſe however, if they have a ſenſe of their Misfortune, muſt not be dejected, but ought daily to ſtrive againſt it, by compoſing their Thoughts with a due ſubjection to God's Will; by exerciſing their Minds in reflecting upon the great Obligation they have of a juſt Faith and Hope in Good; and frequently conſidering, how much more it is their Intereſt, to provide againſt Eternal Evils, than thoſe that are Temporal. From ſuch Endeavours, join'd with Prayer, may be expected ſome abatement of this Diſtemper; and if that Part which cannot be overcome, be daily lamented as an Evil, and the trouble of it be ſuffer'd with Patience, 'till God ſhall ſend Remedy, I hope, it will be no more charg'd upon them, than other Inclinations and Paſſions; which, being Involuntary, cannot carry with them the Guilt of Wilful Sin.

But as for Chriſtians in general, it is their common Concern to prevent in them the growth of this unhappy Temper. And a general Means muſt be, by daily labouring to work their Minds into as much Indifferency, as they can, as to all Things of this World; becauſe this is the Way to gain Liberty for their Souls, and prevent

vent that Narrowneſs of Spirit, which is a general Cauſe of Sollicitude. Another general Means, muſt be by a prudent Education; for ſince the great number of our Neceſſities are the Occaſion of our Sollicitude, and theſe are not ſo much from Nature, as from Cuſtom; 'tis very evident that where, by a hardy Education, the ordinary Wants are brought into a narrow Compaſs, there the Mind is more eaſily contented, and freed from the Temptations and Weakneſſes of a nicer Education; whence, it muſt be concluded, that as our Deſires are enlarg'd, and our Wants multiplied, either by our own or Parents indiſcreet Indulgence; ſo far is laid in us the Seed of future Sollcitude, with all the unhappineſs it cauſes, both as to this World, and the next. Another help may be, in not being too earneſt in things, that are either indifferent in themſelves, or but Inconſiderable; becauſe 'tis impoſſible, that any ſhould be long free from Diſquiets, who can be pleas'd with nothing, but what is done their own way; whence I cannot but diſapprove of their Method, who being fenc'd againſt Neceſſity, are ſo bent upon Impertinencies, and have their Satisfaction depending on ſo many Niceties, that they are under as general an Uneaſineſs, as thoſe, who have

their

their Bread to ſeek. Here is a Sollicitude, that is certainly their own Fault; and I queſtion not, but they will be charg'd with the Guilt of all thoſe Hindrances, which it brings upon them. They are many Ways, O God, by which Chriſtians are brought into the Temptation of tranſgreſſing thy Command; and their help can be only from thee: Give them therefore, I beſeech thee, a true Senſe of the Life that is to come, that no Worldly Concern may take place of it in their Hearts, but that ſeeking that in the firſt place, they may be under thy care as to all things elſe, and depending on thee, as their Father, may not loſe Heaven by that Sollicitude, which only diſturbs, but can help them nothing as to this World.

Fifteenth Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL,

Luke C. 7. V. 11. ends V. 16.

OUR *Lord, moved with Compaſſion, ſaid to her, Weep not,* That is, to the Widow, who was accompanying her only

only Son to the Grave. Chriſt having Compaſſion on this Afflicted Mother, teaches his Followers, not to deſpiſe their Neighbour in Affliction, or paſs him by without any regard to his Miſery; for that this muſt proceed from want of Light, and of Charity; but to expreſs a Senſe of his Misfortune, and contribute, in the beſt manner they are able, to the drying up his Tears. All the Evils of this Life are the Conſequence of Man's Sin, the Marks of our Condemnation, and the Execution of that Sentence, which excluded us from our firſt Happineſs: As often then, as we ſee our Neighbour under Affliction, is there not ſufficient reaſon to open our Hearts to Grief, if not for his ſake, at leaſt for our own; ſince all Affliction ought to revive in us the Memory of our loſt Happineſs, and make us apprehenſive of the uncertain Iſſue of Sin, which, we ſee, is puniſh'd with ſuch Severity, even in this Life? For is it not obvious, that all Evils here, are part of that Cup of Gall and Bitterneſs, which the Juſtice of God has prepar'd for all Sinners of the Earth, and of which the Reprobate ſhall drink for Eternity, who have made no Advantage of thoſe Misfortunes, which were ſent for their trial here? Are they not all Arguments of God's Wrath againſt Sin? In the

Afflictions

Afflictions then of others, we ſee what we are, what we deſerve, and what it is, that threatens us; we ſee the Uncertainty and Vanity of Human Hopes, which fail the Poſſeſſors; and after many Enjoyments, and the Promiſes of a ſeeming Security, leave them at length, by the Experience of Miſery, to be convinc'd of their Credulity and Folly. In fine, ſo many Leſſons there are in the ſight of Human Miſery, that either for our own ſakes, or thoſe that ſuffer, the Soul muſt neceſſarily be touch'd with ſome feeling of it, and there is nothing but Inſenſibility, that can ſhut out Compaſſion.

But however, while thus we are directed to have a Charitable Tenderneſs for all that ſuffer, and to join with Chriſt in our Endeavours for removing the occaſion of their Tears; yet I believe, amongſt the many Misfortunes, which generally cauſe wet Eyes, very few of them are real Evils; and the Grief, which follows them, is only the Effect of our Blindneſs and Weakneſs, but ſo far from being juſtly due, that to the greateſt part of thoſe, that mourn, we may, without enquiry, and with little danger of miſtake, poſitively thus ſay to them, *Noli flere: Weep not.*

This we may poſitively ſay, in regard of all Temporal Evils, if we conſider them

them as the Appointments or Permiſſion of God; for in this Conſideration, tho' Nature be uneaſie under them, yet from every Believer there is a Submiſſion due to the orders of God; ſo that it is no leſs than a kind of Rebellion, to let that be the Subject of an indulg'd or affected Grief, which is not the Effect of Chance, but according to the Ordinance of God; here then it is, the Chriſtian ought to be afraid, by his Mourning and Tears, to call in queſtion what has been decreed in Heaven; and is bound, by doing violence to Nature, to confeſs, that all is juſt and good what God has done; and with *David*, to give a Check to all the Complaints both of Words and Tears, becauſe the Finger of God is in all: *Obmutui & non aperui os meum, quoniam tu feciſti: I was ſilent, and open'd not my Mouth, becauſe it is thou, Lord, who haſt done it.* Weep not therefore, Chriſtian; *Noli flere:* Becauſe, whatever be the occaſion of thy Grief; it is thy God has thought fit it ſhould be ſo; it is thy Lord, who has done it. And it is no other than Chriſt, who ſays to thee, *Nole flere: Weep not.*

If we conſidet theſe Evils again according to the Order of Providence in thoſe Ends, which God propoſes in them, we ſhall find, that tho' the immediate Effects

are

are diſagreeable to Nature, yet they have more of real Bleſſing, than Misfortune in them. For how often is it, that what we reſent as our greateſt Loſſes, as the Loſs of Children, Friends, Fortune, Preferment, Health, Reputation, are, thro' our unhappineſs, render'd abſolutely neceſſary, either for the diſengaging us from thoſe Sins, in which we are already involv'd; or for preventing ſuch Sins, we ſhould otherwiſe fall into, were not the Occaſions thus ſeaſonably taken out of our Hands? We ſee here, before Chriſt rais'd the Young Man, he touch'd the Bier; upon which thoſe, who were carrying him to the Grave, ſtood ſtill. Sinful Paſſions are the Bearers, which carry Sinners to the Grave, as long as theſe go on, there can be no hopes of their ariſing. Is it not then a Mercy, that God ſo diſpoſes Second Cauſes, as to put a ſtop to them: that he makes uſe of Diſappointments, Adverſities, Sickneſs, *&c.* to break off the Courſe of our Paſſions, and thus to put us in a Diſpoſition of reflecting upon our unhappy ſtate, and of opening our Hearts to him, who commands us to ariſe? This is certainly the Mercy deſig'd us, in many of thoſe Accidents, we ſo much reſent, and make the ground of our Complaint. And while God

God is thus Good in the Afflictions he ſends, muſt it not be moſt adviſable for Chriſtians, under all manner of Trials, peaceably to reſt in the Orders of God; and to hope, that what is thus bitter to the taſte, is only by way of Medicine, and that the Effect of it will be the health of the Soul; and therefore, that it cannot be warranted in ſuch eaſe to yield under the weight of Grief, leſt in pretending to lament a Misfortune, they preſumptuouſly and ungratefully turn themſelves againſt a Bleſſing? As to all Temporal Evils therefore, *Noli flere*: *Weep not*: And if Nature be inclin'd to Grief, ſet Faith againſt Nature, and by its healing Principles, endeavour as ſoon as may be, to dry up its Tears; for it may be a Mercy, what thou call'ſt thy Miſery; therefore *Weep not.*

There is only one Evil, we may ſecurely lament without danger of Miſtake, and that is the Evil of Sin. In this Afflicted Mother bewailing the Death of her Son, is figur'd to us the Church in Grief for the Loſs of ſo many of her Children, which She has brought forth by Baptiſm; and we are ſo far from being diſcourag'd, that we are call'd upon to join with her in theſe Tears. At the laſt Day, when her Spouſe ſhall meet her, he will then ſay

ſay to her, *Noli flere*: *Weep no more*: Becauſe there will be no more reaſon than to weep, after the Sanctification of all the Elect. But now, whilſt She is in her Widowhood, and in the Abſence of her Spouſe, 'tis her principal Exerciſe to follow Sinners, and lament their Death, till they either find Jeſus, or being laid in their Grave, are paſt all hopes of finding him. It is by her Tears Chriſt is mov'd to have Compaſſion on Sinners; and her Tears being nothing but the Penance done by thoſe, who are in her Boſom, and in the Spirit of her Spouſe; hence it is, that all her Members are bound to join their Prayers, Penance and Tears, ſo to move Chriſt to have Mercy on Sinners; and granting them the Spirit of a true Converſion, reſtore them to a new Life.

As therefore in that Train, which Chriſt met on the Way, there were only Two Sorts of People; the Dead Party, whoſe Funeral it was, and the Perſons who accompanied the Afflicted Mother: So it is in the Church; there are in it but Two Sorts of People; thoſe, whoſe Death is lamented, and thoſe, who lament: All are on one ſide or the other; ſuch as mourn not, make up part of that number, who being dead, are the juſt occaſion of others Mourning. It is by this

this we may make ſome judgment of our State: If we are ſenſibly touch'd with the Spiritual Death of our Brethren, and of the infinite number, who fall by the Devil's Power or Snares; if we do what we are able, for preſerving the Life of any, if we take part with the Church in her Mourning and Praying, we may have ſome Confidence of being living Members of the Church, who Comfort her, and not of the number of the Dead, who are the Subject of her Grief. But if we have none of this Concern in us, if it be a Point we do not think of, and are not touch'd with the Loſs of ſo many Souls, which periſh daily, there's reaſon enough to fear, we make one of that number.

I wiſh therefore all Chriſtians would ſeriouſly reflect on this Point; of the almoſt univerſal Corruption of the Believing World; how far Vice and Error ſpread; how general a Forgetfulneſs there is of God: O what numbers of Souls periſh daily! For ſuch a Conſideration, I think is enough to oblige them to join daily with the Church in her Mourning, and to renounce a great part of that Life made up of Idleneſs and Divertiſements, which to ſuch as have their Eyes open, can be no more becoming and agreable, than for Children to be found amidſt their

Idle Entertainments, on the Day, when their Father or Mother is carried forth to the Grave. And since they have an Assurance, that by the Exercises of Devotion, Charity and Penance, they may prevail on the Divine Mercy, and recover Sinners from the Bonds of Death, can it be less than Cruelty to neglect these Duties, and live away their Days in Idleness and unprofitable Divertisements? Grant, O God, to all Christians a Sense of this general Misery, that they may not, like Unbelievers, there mourn, where Thanksgiving may be due; but lament only the Evil of Sin, both in themselves and others, that so they may obtain Pardon of all their Offences, and by this Charity, help to regain those to Life, who are dead to God, and in the Way to Death Everlasting.

Sixteenth Sunday *after* Pentecost.

GOSPEL,

Luke C. 14. V. 1. ends V. 11.

IT came to pass, when Jesus entred into the House of a certain Chief of the Pharisees

ſees to eat Bread. We cannot do better on this Day, than enter with Jeſus into this Houſe, and ſee what we can learn from him.

The firſt Leſſon is to Paſtors, who being oblig'd to have ſome Commerce with the World, ought not to let this be, to amuſe themſelves, or paſs away their time, which they are at a loſs how to employ; for this they do not learn from Jeſus Chriſt; but for ſome Advantage of themſelves or others, as Chriſt here did, for healing the Sick Man, and inſtructing the Phariſees in the true Principles of Humility. Such Commerce is Authoriz'd by Chriſt, but not that, which is unprofitable, which cannot fail of giving Authority to whatever is done in their Preſence, and is a Reproach to their Character, in betraying a want of worldly Amuſements to help away their Time, or to keep up their Spirits.

The Second is general to all Chriſtians, to put them in mind, that 'tis not only lawful to heal on the Sabbath, but that as Chriſt then reſtor'd Health to the Sick Man, that was before him, ſo they ought ever to look on it as a Day appointed by God, in Mercy to them, wherein they are commanded to conſider of all the Infirmities of their Souls, and have recourſe to

ſuch Means, as he has ordain'd for their Cure. If he has forbid all Servile and Unneceſſary Labour, 'tis not becauſe this is in it ſelf unlawful, but that ſuch Labours may be no hindrance to better Duties: And hence it muſt be adviſable for all, to conſider the End of this Prohibition, and to cut off a great part of thoſe Labours, which Cuſtom, Gluttony, Vanity, Niceneſs or Vice ſeem to have made Neceſſary; that ſo Servants, who are under the diſſipation of continual Labour all the Week, may, on this Day, have leiſure to provide for Eternity, and not charge their neglect of Salvation on thoſe, who knowing not how to diſpenſe with Cuſtom, would not allow them time to think of it. And if they here obſerve the reaſon, why Labour is forbid, may not they hence frame a true Judgment of all other Methods, that are a hindrance to the Duties of the Day, as in giving the greateſt part of it to Sleeping, Sloth, Converſation, Entertainments, Viſits, &c? A Day thus ſpent is far from being kept Holy; and therefore not anſwering the Purpoſes of its Inſtitution, cannot be approv'd in thoſe, who are then call'd, both by Command and Example, to ſeek the health of their Souls, and make Proviſion for Eternity.

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The third Leſſon is the Charitable Condeſcendence of Chriſt, who not letting the ill Diſpoſition of the Jews hinder him from healing the Sick Man on the Sabbath, yet, at the ſame time, was Sollicitous to remove the Scandal, this Cure had caus'd in them; and for this End, lays before them the moſt plauſible Reaſons, and ſuch as were moſt proportion'd to their miſtaken Judgments. From which Fact it may be obſerv'd, that how unjuſt ſoever the Scandal be, yet we ought always to remedy it, if we can. And ſuch Endeavours cannot fail either of the Effect deſir'd or, of diminiſhing ſomething at leaſt of the Averſion rais'd; ſince this being an Argument of regard being had to their Judgments, it muſt neceſſarily render them more favourable. The not valuing unjuſt Scandals, is, on the contrary, often the Effect of a ſecret Contempt, or want of Charity, or of Sloth at leaſt, which will not take pains to ſatisfie ſuch People, upon what Motives they have acted: Whilſt true Charity and Humility oblige us to more Condeſcendence; ſince the more People are unjuſt, the greater is their Indiſpoſition; and in proportion to their Diſtemper, ſo are they more worthy of Compaſſion.

A Fourth is to obſerve in the Phariſees, how much the Judgment is corrupted by Paſſion: We ſee in them, that ſometimes the Paſſions are favourable to Reaſon, and ſometimes ſtand againſt it; whence it happens, that the ſame Reaſon approving what is Conformable to its Principles, when the thing happens to be ſuitable to Paſſion too, is rejected as being of no force, when it is not at the ſame time favourable to Paſſion, and wants this Support, or is contrary to ſome other Paſſion, which is more violent. The Phariſees were very Covetous, and this Paſſion made them unwilling to loſe any thing belonging to them, as their Ox, or Aſs, or any thing elſe tho' but inconſiderable: Hence their love of Intereſt influencing their Reaſon, made them judge aright, when this Matter was before them, and they were ready enough in concluding, that it was no violation of the Sabbath, to take their Ox or Aſs out of a Ditch on that Day, and do what ſhould be neceſſary to preſerve them: But their Love of their Neighbour being not very great, and their exceſſive Vanity, puſhing them on to render themſelves remarkable for their exact Obſervation of the Law, this Vanity made them conclude it a breach of the Sabbath, to Relieve and Cure a Sick Man on that Day. Their Intereſt

tereſt was here greater than the Opinion they had of the Strictneſs of the Sabbath-Law; but the Love of their Neighbour, being leſs than the Deſire they had of ſignalizing themſelves, in the rigorous keeping of the Law; hence they judg'd it reaſonable to conſult the Safety of what was their own, but made it the Subject of the Memory, to paſs by their Neighbour in Miſery, and neglect his Intereſt, under the Pretext of Piety. So that they were unjuſt both in the one and the other, becauſe, even when they reaſon'd aright, it was not by the force of Reaſon, but only of their Paſſion, and the Love of their own Intereſt.

Whence we have two Inſtructions: One from the Argument taken up by Chriſt againſt the Phariſees; That for doing Good to others, it is Wiſdom to ſtudy in them thoſe Particulars, where their Paſſions give them a Taſt of Reaſon; ſo to make them ſenſible of their Injuſtice, or affected Miſtake in other Points, where their Paſſions make them inſenſible of the Force it carries with it. The other from the Example of the Phariſees; to wit, That there is nothing, which Piety over-rul'd by Paſſion, is not capable of abuſing. This made them deſpiſe their Neighbour in his Affliction; perſwade their Follow-

ers to abandon their Parents in Diſtreſs, under the Pretext of honouring God with the Money, that ſhou'd have been their Relief, and to ſcruple at Trifles, whilſt they made bold with the Eſſential Precepts of the Law; as in putting Chriſt to Death by their falſe Accuſations, and making a Conſcience of laying the Silver, which *Judas* brought, in the Treaſury of the Temple. And if thus the Devil leaves in Men the Appearance of Conſcience and Piety, whilſt by evident Crimes he takes away the Subſtance, is there not Reaſon for all to be upon the watch, ſo to prevent their deceiving themſelves with the Shadow of Virtue, and being deceiv'd by the counterfeit Piety of others?

The laſt Leſſon is the Inſtruction given by Chriſt to the Phariſees, for avoiding Pride; where, by putting them in mind of the Affront, to which a Perſon expoſes himſelf; who chuſing the firſt place, is in danger of being remov'd with Shame, and oblig'd to ſurrender it to others, he helps their Reaſon, even by Pride it ſelf, for the condemning of Pride. By this Hint here given us, we may learn to advance the Cauſe of Humility in many other Occaſions, by employing Pride againſt Pride. For ſince it is obvious, that whatever Perſons are obſerv'd to do, for diſtinguiſhing

ſtinguiſhing themſelves from others, is enough to make them ridiculous and odious, and moſt certainly renders them contemptible; and that there is a neceſſity of Counterfeiting Humility and Modeſty, for coming to the End of Vanity, which is gaining the Eſteem of Men; is not this Argument enough to convince all of the Deformity of Pride; ſince it is of that Nature, that even Men cannot bear it, if it be not diſguis'd? And what then muſt it be in regard of God, who being Juſtice and Truth it ſelf, ſees its whole deformity, and not only when 'tis barefaced, but even under its moſt ſubtile diſguiſes? And whilſt Reaſon thus help'd by Pride, is oblig'd to condemn it, ought it not to go on farther, and not only condemn it, as 'tis Ridiculous to Man, but under all its Covers, and in its whole Extent, becauſe of the Eſſential Injuſtice in it, which renders it deteſtable to God? Thus Chriſtians ought to do, and conſequently to own this Truth, That he, who exalts himſelf, ſhall be humbled; that is, be as nothing in the ſight of God. This, O Jeſus, we are bound to acknowledge, as likewiſe the Mercy of all other Truths, thou haſt here taught us; grant only, that we may daily improve from thy Inſtruction, and may not be carried away by the violence

of our own paſſions, or miſtaken Reaſon, while we have thy Truths to enlighten us, and make us watchful againſt all ſuch Deluſions.

Seventeenth Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL,

Mat. C. 22. V. 35. to the end.

WHat *is the Great Commandment in the Law?* This Queſtion is put to Chriſt by a Doctor of the Law; and the Goſpel obſerves his Deſign in propoſing it, was *Tentans eum*, to Tempt or lay a Snare before him. There are Three Sorts of Enemies of Chriſt mention'd in this Chapter, and Three Sorts of Temptations or Snares prepar'd againſt him. The Firſt, is of the Herodians or Politicians, and Perſons of the Court, concerning the Rights of the Prince, and Matters of State, *ver.* 16. The Second of the Sadduces, or Hereticks and Libertines, about the Principles of Religion and Faith, *ver.* 23. The Third of the Phariſees, or looſe Caſuiſts, and Falſe Devotiſts, about Morality, and here in particular about the Love of God. From all

all theſe Chriſt wonderfully diſengag'd himſelf, according to the Dictates of his Infinite Wiſdom, ſo as to ſilence his Enemies, and let them make no Advantage of their Malicious Deſigns. From his Example, the Followers of Chriſt cannot be ſurpriz'd, if, like their Maſter, they cannot live in this World, without having Spies upon them, and ſuch, whoſe ſecret Malice puſhes them on, either to leſſen their Reputation, or ſeek their Ruin. They have only ſo much more reaſon to be Cautious in their Actions an Anſwers, inaſmuch as the moſt hidden Deſigns being manifeſt to Chriſt, they are too often conceal'd from them, under the Cover of a ſeeming Civility, and pretended Eſteem; and therefore obliges them, not only to a Prudent Reſervedneſs, but, moſt of all, to ſollicite Heaven daily; that by a Supernatural Wiſdom they may be arm'd againſt all Snares, and ſecur'd againſt the Dangers of their own Indiſcreet Candour, groundleſs Confidence in others, or immoderate Poſitiveneſs in their own Thoughts.

And this is not only to be in regard of Enemies, but of Friends too; the Goodneſs and Credulous Temper of thoſe, with whom we Converſe, being often a Snare to us. The more Confidence Perſons have

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in us, the more are we oblig'd to be on our guard, that we may not hurt them by what we ſay, who are ready to take all for a Rule. However therefore there be danger in converſing with ſuch as are averſe to us; yet I think, there are no Perſons, with whom we are bound to be more Circumſpect, and obſerve ſtricter Meaſures, than thoſe, who are prepar'd to take after our Example, ſince whatever we expoſe to their Eyes, is ſubject to be Copied; and, if it will not bear it, who muſt anſwer for the Conſequences of ſuch Indiſcretion? Thus then we may truly ſay, we live in the midſt of Snares, and are ever in danger of being ſurpriz'd in them, if the Communication of Chriſt's Heavenly Wiſdom be not our Light to diſcern them, and our Strength to avoid them.

The Demand being made to Chriſt, as above, he thus anſwers the Queſtion: *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind*: *This*, ſays he, *is the Firſt and Greateſt Commandment*: 'Tis the Greateſt in *Dignity*, becauſe it immediately regards God himſelf: In *Juſtice*, becauſe it alone renders to God what belongs to God, giving him the Preference to all things: In *Power*, becauſe it makes God alone Reign in

in our Hearts, and unites Man to God: In *Extent*, becauſe it leaves nothing to the Creature, which it does not refer to God: In *Neceſſity*, becauſe 'tis Indiſpenſible: In *Durance*, becauſe, being not to be interrupted on Earth, it is to laſt for all Eternity in Heaven.

The Love of God being thus the greateſt of all the Commandments, it muſt be the Chriſtian's greateſt Intereſt to ſatisfie it; and his Care in complying with it, ought to be anſwerable to the Greatneſs of the Command, and to the Intereſt he has in it; that is, it ought to exceed all other Cares and Concerns, whether for Health, Liberty, Life, or any other Convenience or Advantage of this World. O God! How Miſerable then am I, who daily feel the weight of ſo many other things preſſing upon my Spirits, above the Concern of Loving Thee!

It were to be wiſh'd, Chriſtians could come ſo far in this Point, as to find the Love of God bearing upon their Hearts with ſuch a weight, as to make them as earneſt in doing the Will of God, as eager in pleaſing him, as deſirous of enjoying him, as Parents are in regard of their Children, whom they love, and Friends of their Friends, whom they admire, and are Sollicitous more ſtrictly to

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engage to them. Such an Inclination or Bent of the Heart, carrying it along with a ſweet Violence thro' all Duties and Difficulties of Life, is the moſt deſirable Comfort a Chriſtian can hope for in this Life, and that, which will give him the ſtrongeſt Aſſurance of being prepar'd for a better.

But it being a Privilege granted to few, to have the love of God thus ſenſibly to work upon the Affections, it ought not to be a Subject of Grief to Chriſtians, if they thus find it not; they are to be contented with whatever Diſpenſations of Grace and Love, God ſhall grant them, and in the manner he ſhall pleaſe: Their greater Concern ought to be, rather to find the Effects, than the Feeling or Senſe of it, and therefore, if, upon Obſervation, they can diſcover, that they bring forth its Fruit, in avoiding Sin, and whatever God forbids, and in a zealous compliance with what they know to be his Will, ſo as not to permit either the Natural Affection to Creatures, or the love of Convenience, Intereſt, Pleaſure, or any earthly Satisfactions, to take place of Duty, but are ever ready to quit whatever is not conſiſtent with it, or puts it in hazard, this ought to give reſt to their Souls, and be ſufficient Argument to hope, that the King-

Kingdom of God is in them; that is, that God rules in them; and that his Love is Maſter of their Hearts; and where this Fruit is not found, there is nothing elſe can give a grounded Satisfaction; but ſuch Chriſtians are to ſuſpect themſelves of being Hypocrites or Counterfeits, whatever their Habit, Profeſſion, or remarkable Zeal otherwiſe be, tho' ſufficient to gain the Reputation of being Saints in the eſteem of Men.

But this Life being not a ſtate of Perfection, it is ſcarce to be expected, that the love of God ſhould ſo entirely poſſeſs the Heart, as to exclude the love all other things. If the Love of God has the firſt place in our Heart, ſo that we give God the preference to all things, and let nothing have the preference to him, we in this ſatisfy the ſubſtance of this Precept. But however there may be ſtill many Imperfections, as in the deſire and love of Creatures; not ſo as to make them our laſt end, for this would be Criminal, but only in ſuch a moderate way, as rather to be ſome Hindrance, than interrupt our Courſe towards God: In this degree, it cannot be denied, but ſuch voluntary Affections are in themſelves evil; and yet it cannot be thought, that God will impute them to us, as Crimes which deprive

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us of his Grace, and baniſh us his Preence; ſince tho' they are the occaſion of our taking ſome falſe ſteps, in ſome voluntary Conſent to the love of Creatures, yet 'tis not in ſuch Capital Points, to which he has declar'd his abhorrence, with the Puniſhment annex'd of a perpetual excluſion from him.

All love of Creatures therefore is not Mortal, becauſe it has not always the command of our Hearts ſo as to render us Slaves to it; But however it fails not to be always dangerous, and is the beginning of Servitude, in moving the Heart by Fear, by Hope, by Deſires, and by continual Endeavours of bringing it into a total ſubjection; and ſince by this way it is in danger of looſing ground, by inſenſibly yielding to ſuch Attempts; hence are all oblig'd to look upon ſuch Affections as their Unhappineſs, and make it the Subject of their daily Prayers and Labours, to weaken and overcome them.

When they are Involuntary, and the Effect of Temper, they are a perplexing Exerciſe, ſuch as are very tireſome to Good Souls, but whatever their Violence and Continuance be, the Guilt cannot be charg'd upon them, more than of other Corrupt Inclinations, which they never feel, but with diſlike; in this Caſe Patience

ence and Humility is to be their help, rather than Penance, and Anxiouſly to diſquiet themſelves muſt be judg'd Indiſcretion. But the Caſe is otherwiſe, when dangerous Affections are voluntary; for in theſe, Man being ſubject to great Partiality and Blindneſs, a Neglect of them may be eaſily follow'd with very Criminal Exceſſes. Thus ſtands our Caſe, O God, that while we are commanded to love thee with all our Hearts, we are ever in danger of being unhappily drawn from thee by thy Creatures; which when we ſeriouſly conſider, and put them in the ballance againſt Thee, we can only Admire, and be Confounded at our Folly, in being thus diverted, by the Satisfaction of Momentary Trifles, from ſeeking the Poſſeſſion of thee our Infinite and Everlaſting Good. Help us, O God, in this our Miſery, ſtrengthen our Reaſon and Faith againſt ſuch Madneſs; permit us no more to let the Love of Creatures take thy place in our Hearts; but as we deſire the Eternal Enjoyment of Thee, ſo give us Grace to ſeek it, by loving thee, as thou commandeſt, with all our Hearts, and with all our Souls.

Eighteenth

Eighteenth Sunday *after* Pentecost.

GOSPEL,

Mat. C. 9. V. 1. ends V. 8.

THey laid before him one sick of the Palsie, lying on a Bed. This is the Person mention'd by St. *Luke*, C. 5. who being brought by his Friends to Christ, and finding no possibility of coming up to him, because of the Croud, open'd the Roof of the House, and with Cords let him down on his Bed before him. This their Industrious Charity was soon approv'd by Christ; who, as the Gospel says, *Videns fidem illorum, Seeing their Faith*, presently turn'd to the Sick Man, and comforted him with the Hopes of his Immediate Cure. This Effect their Charity had upon Christ, in moving him to a present Compassion, ought to be an Encouragement to all others, to seek his Help, by the same Method. The Infinite Miseries, to which we are subject in this Life, both as to Soul and Body, are Proof enough of the continual Want we have of

of his Aſſiſtance; and many of theſe are ſo preſſing, that they often put us upon conſidering, what may be the moſt Effectual Means for obliging him to come in to our Relief. This Point is here ſo fully anſwer'd, that I think none, who deſire his Help, can be in doubt of the way they are to take for prevailing on his Goodneſs. And ſince the Method is ſuch, that there are no Circumſtances, wherein Chriſtians have not the Opportunity of practiſing it, there can be none but thoſe, who inſenſible of their own Miſeries, deſire no Help, that do not undertake it.

The Practice here directly encourag'd is that of giving Aſſiſtance to the Sick; and in this Point the Charity of many Perſons and Families is very remarkable, who have not only their Doors always open to the Poor, and Medicines provided for their Infirmities, but are likewiſe ready to give them Attendance, and leave all other Buſineſs for their Comfort and Relief. How much better is Money and Time employ'd in making Proviſion for ſuch Charities, than in preparing Curioſities, which are never call'd for by Neceſſity, but only to anſwer the Endleſs, but Superfluous Demands of an indulg'd Appetite! Whilſt the greater number there-

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fore of Christians are thus laying out their Money, in ways that will never be taken in Accounts, I encourage these better Stewards to go on in their Charitable Method of helping the Poor; and I dare be their Security, since I have Christ's Word to be mine, that God will be their Faithful Rewarder, in making all that their own Interest, which has been employ'd for the Relief of their Neighbours Distress. I only wonder, that amongst such numbers, who are every way capable of doing Good to themselves, by being Physicians and Comforters of the Poor, there are so few, who seek to make an Interest with Heaven this way, but chuse rather to please themselves in Idleness, than thus honourably to work for Heaven.

Besides this, there are many other ways, even as many as our Neighbour is in want of our Assistance, and we are cappable of giving it, by which we may render Heaven propitious to us. And this may be extended so far, as positively to pronounce, that there is not any Service so Mean and Inconsiderable, but 'tis in our Power, by putting our Hand to it, as Occasion may seem to call us, to make it an Act of Charity, much more serviceable to our selves, than to those we seem

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to help. Whence they have Reaſon to bleſs God for their happy Diſpoſition, who make no Exceptions againſt any thing they can do, but free from all niceneſs in this Affair, are ever ready and chearful, in lending a Hand, where-ever there appears Occaſion, that demands their Help; for theſe live in the continual Practice of Charity; and there is nothing wanting for making it their Eternal Advantage, but raiſing it above Natural Inclination, and offering it a Sacrifice to God, in compliance with his Will, who has declar'd his Acceptance of it. And as for thoſe, who will go no further, than ſtrict Obligation ſeems to be a Force upon them, but are ever diſputing upon Terms, Bounds and Priviledges, and will not take one ſtep beyond the Evidence of theſe, without grumbling. I think they have reaſon to reſent their own ill Temper and take pains, in overcoming it, for that the principal Ingredients of it are nothing better than Pride and Lazineſs; and as theſe muſt render them ridiculous to Men, ſo they muſt certainly bring them into the Diſpleaſure of God; ſince they muſt neceſſarily fall into many ſinful Omiſſions, who are with this niceneſs ſo often ſtanding upon Terms,

Beſides

Besides these Temporal Charities, there are many Spiritual; one Principal of these and obvious to all, thro' their Iniquity or Rashness, with whom we converse or live, is that of putting our Neighbour in mind of his Faults, in such a manner, as may encourage him to be more careful and reform. This I here mention, because St. *Augustine* judges the Omission of it a great failing in the Good, to be sensible of the great Provocation the common Sins of Men give to God, and with what Rigorous Punishment he threatens them, and yet to pass them by without Censure or Reproof, as if there was nothing sinful in them. This he presses so far in his *City of God*, as to think this Omission to have been the principal Occasion of that severe Judgment, in his days, upon *Rome* and *Italy*, when the *Goths* coming in like a Torrent, laid all waste with a common Destruction. And he charges the Guilt of this Omission in particular upon the Good; for that, tho' it was commendable in them, to distinguish themselves from the Wicked, by not concurring in their Crimes; yet their Silence in not reproving was culpable, since there was nothing could suspend this Charity but only Sloth, Vicious Bashfulness or the Fear of displeasing, in the Attempt of doing

doing them Good. 'Tis true, there is great Prudence neceſſary in performing this Charity; but however it may very often be ſafely practic'd; and, I fear, the great Reaſon of Silence, is rather the Weakneſſes cenſur'd by St. *Auguſtine*, than the Judgment of Diſcretion.

But however, it was not only the Charity of thoſe, that brought the Sick Man, but his own interior Diſpoſition, that prevail'd on Chriſt for his ſo ſpeedy Cure: For ſince we hear Chriſt thus ſpeaking to him; *Son, have Confidence, thy Sins are forgiven thee*, it cannot be doubted, but he had greater Senſe of the Diſtemper of his Soul, than of his Body; that while his Charitable Friends expected the Cure of his Palſie, he himſelf deſir'd more earneſtly the Pardon of his Sins; and that it was to anſwer his Deſire, Jeſus Chriſt ſaid to him; *Have Confidence, thy Sins are forgiven thee*: Since the Pardon of Sins is granted to none, but thoſe who ſincerely deſire it. And whilſt we ſee the Sick Man thus Cur'd of his Infirmity; and that the ſame Words, which declar'd the Health of his Soul, gave him Health of his Body have not we in this a plain Inſtruſtion, that Sickneſs is to be look'd upon as the Puniſhment of Sin; and therefore, that under all Diſtempers, 'tis moſt adviſeable to look

look into the firſt Cauſe, and, like this Paralytic, to be more earneſt for obtaining Pardon of Sin, than the Cure of the Diſtemper, or at leaſt, to ſeek health by the Recovery of Grace. This muſt be a good Practice under all Misfortunes; for, tho' the Motives of Providence in appointing or permitting them, may be many; yet one general Cauſe being in Puniſhment of Sin, a Chriſtian may ſafely look on them, as the Signs of God's Diſpleaſure, and the Effects of Sin, and therefore at their firſt Approach, cannot do better, than to make his Peace with God, and in the Spirit of true Penance, labour to turn away his Anger from him; in which he cannot fail of a good Effect, either in removing his Affliction, or in obtaining ſuch Succours from God, by which he may be enabled to ſuffer with Patience, and make an Advantage of his Trial.

This is much more to the purpoſe, than to complain of his Burthen, and anxiouſly to diſquiet himſelf, in conſidering what may be the Occaſion of the Scourge, or to ſit down dejected upon the Suppoſition of God being angry; for this is yielding to the Deſigns of the Enemy, who thus contrives to oppreſs his Soul with Darkneſs, and by interior Confuſion,

fuſion, to prevent all the Fruit of his Sufferings: Whilſt a Sincere Repentance, joyn'd with an Humble Submiſſion to the Orders of Providence, will either remove the Evils, or make them Means of Salvation. Wherefore, O God, I here make it my Humble Petition to thee, that, at whatever time thou ſhalt viſit me with Affliction or Sickneſs, I may not then forget the Method of improving under it, by letting Impatience or Dejection oppreſs my Soul, but looking on it as a Summons to Repentance, I may be Sollicitous to make my Peace with thee, and then peaceably wait the Iſſue thy Goodneſs has appointed. In the mean time, let me be Induſtrious, in Contributing all ways I am able, to the help of my Neighbour, that ſo I may hope to find the Effects of thy power and Mercy, when the Hour of Diſtreſs ſhall come upon me.

Nineteenth Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL,

Mat. C. 22. V. 1. ends V. 14.

HE *ſent his Servants to call to the Marriage, thoſe that were invited, and they would not come.* The whole Goſpel is a Parable, in which, under the Figure of a King inviting Gueſts to the Marriage of his Son, is expreſs'd the Goodneſs of God, calling all to the Faith of his Son made Man, and by this Faith, to be Gueſts at his Table, in the Poſſion of Eternal Happineſs; and under the Figure of thoſe, who, being invited, neglected to come to the Marriage, is repreſented the unhappy Occaſion of their Miſery, who periſh; where 'tis plainly ſhewn, that 'tis thro' their own fault, in neglecting the Summons of Mercy, which calls upon them, and making ſuch things their hindrance, which ought not to be ſo. The Mercy of God here manifeſted, exacts from us a continual Homage of Adoration and Thanks, for that without any Motive on our parts

parts, he has provided for our Happineſs, and call'd us to the Enjoyment of it, tho' wholly unworthy. The general Neglect on the part of Man, is that, which challenges both our Tears and Confuſion; for that the Acceptance of this Mercy being his Intereſt alone, and even his Eternal Intereſt, he is ſo ungratefully careleſs in it as to put by this Concern for Momentary Trifles, ſuch as muſt ſoon be taken from him, and be the Occaſion of his Everlaſting Miſery, thro' the Injuſtice of his Choice. Happy we, if we could be ſo truly ſenſible of this Folly, this Day, as to let the Conſideration be the Means of preventing our being an Inſtance of it.

Of thoſe, who refus'd to go to the Marriage, Three Sorts are here mention'd; Firſt, One who went to his Country-houſe. Secondly, Another, who was buſied in his Traffick. Laſtly, Others who ſeiz'd and kill'd the Servants ſent to call them. In which are ſignified Three States in danger of living unmindful of God and Salvation, without regarding any Calls from Heaven. Firſt, The Soft, Idle and Voluptuous Life; where the only Concern is peaceably to enjoy Health, Goods, Conveniencies, good Cheer, publick Divertiſements, and private Pleaſures. Secondly, The buſy Life, taken up in multiplicity

of Affairs, and gainful Employments: where the love of Riches, and earneſt application of the Mind to promiſing Occaſions, ſtifle all Thoughts of Salvation, and ſteal away the Time, which ought to be given to it. Laſtly, The unjuſt Life, that is, of ſuch as live in profeſs'd Wickedneſs, who not only neglect the Ways of Salvation, but likewiſe expreſs their diſlike againſt thoſe, who are willing to open their Eyes, and put them into the Way of Truth.

Under theſe Three Heads are compriz'd all thoſe unhappy ones, who being Deaf to the Invitations of Mercy, exclude themſelves for ever from it; and being mention'd by Chriſt himſelf, ought to raiſe a Sollicitude in all Chriſtians, that they fall not under them. But this part of the Parable ſeeming to point at thoſe, who being call'd to the belief of Chriſt's Truth, that by a Union in Faith, they may be admitted to the participation of his Table; it ought principally to alarm thoſe, who having Reaſons enough to doubt of their being Members of this Society, upon worldly Motives forbear all farther enquiry, and thus fall under the Guilt of the Gueſts invited; who upon being hinder'd by like Excuſes, are here condemn'd, becauſe *they would not come*. It cannot

cannot be queſtion'd, but that ſince Truth has not only its Difficulties, ſuch as are not to be overcome, but but by the application of a ſincere and induſtrious Mind, but likewiſe lies under many Temporal Diſadvantages, ſo that the Profeſſion of it is generally accompanied with the loſs of eſteem as to the World, and with the hazard of Fortune too; it cannot be queſtion'd, I ſay, but many are eaſily perſwaded to ſtifle whatever Glimpſes or Beams of Light are deſign'd to call them to it, diſcourag'd by the difficulty or trouble, that appears in obeying ſuch a Summons.

Upon this Account, how many are they who, like *Agrippa*, are *almoſt perſwaded* to be what they ſhould be, but have not Courage to take one ſtep farther? How many, like *Felix*, have ſuch a Senſe of Truth, as even to tremble at it, or at the thought of their own Circumſtances, and yet, like, him, want a *Convenient Seaſon* for hearing farther, and can never find it? How many, like *Demetrius* the Silverſmith, upon the proſpect of their being loſers by it, ſtand at a diſtance, and make an Intereſt againſt it? Too many there are, Followers of theſe unhappy Men, who ſtand out againſt the Invitations of Heaven, and againſt the Opportunities of better Information, over-rul'd by variety

of Paſſions, by Self-love, by the love of Eaſe, Convenience, Intereſt, and Ambition, or ſo taken up with Buſineſs, or the Liberties of, Life, that they cannot find a convenient Seaſon; and hence either contemn the Ways of Truth, by the violent Impreſſions of a worldly Spirit, or by the Arguments of a byaſs'd Judgment, falſly perſwade themſelves of the Non-neceſſity of making a Change, upon the ſeeming Conviction of the Way of Truth being broad enough to include them in it, as they are. In this manner great numbers deceive themſelves: But ſince 'tis evident from this Goſpel, that many, who are call'd by God to ſit down at the Table of Chriſt, by ſuch Excuſes exclude themſelves for ever from it; have not all reaſon to make a ſtricter examen of their State, that ſo they incurr not the Guilt of Contemn'd Mercy, which they ſee here puniſh'd with ſuch Severity of an Eternal Baniſhment from Heaven? O God, how much eaſier is it to receive thy Truths, with all their preſent Inconveniencies, than to leave the Conviction to the Terror of thy Judgments?

But the Subject of this Parable is of a greater Extent, ſince we ſee, in the Perſon of him, who, being admitted to the Banquet, was afterwards caſt out, for not having

having a Wedding Garment, they alſo are concern'd, who are Gueſts at the Marriage, and united to Chriſt by Faith: So far, that if theſe have not their Nuptial Robe, that is, if they put not on the New Man, are not veſted with Charity, and live not by the Spirit of Chriſt, they ſhall be certainly caſt forth, and have their Eternal Portion with Unbelievers. 'Tis not therefore enough for Chriſtians to ſay, We have obey'd the Invitation; we are Gueſts at the Marriage of the Lamb with his Church; we are Catholicks: For what will it profit, to be Gueſts at this Banquet, when thoſe are thrown out, who come unprepar'd, or ſit there, under the Deformities of the Old Man, in a manner unbecoming the Sanctity of the Place? Let theſe then remember, that Faith without Charity will profit nothing; that Faith without good Works is dead; that tho' they have great Advantages in the Light of true Faith, and great Helps in being Members of Chriſt's Church; yet if theſe Advantages and Helps are all neglected, and they make no Benefit of theſe Favours receiv'd; their Account will be ſo much greater for the Mercies they have abus'd, and their Damnation will be deeper, than of thoſe, who have never known the Truth.

Thus then, while those are shut out from Heaven, who refus'd to come; and those too, who came to the Banquet unprepar'd; this makes too evident the Conclusion of our present Gospel; That *many are call'd, but few chosen.* And ought not this awaken all manner of Christians, so as neither to neglect the Invitation, nor yet to obey it, without being provided with a Wedding Garment; but to strive, by Good Works, to make their Vocation and Election sure? This is the Way prescrib'd by Christ and his Apostles; much better than what many take, by presumptuously enquiring into the Counsels and Decrees of God, and perplexing themselves with this Question; Whether they be of the number of the Elect? For this is what cannot be discover'd in this Life, and is nothing but a Snare, to take off Christians from the practice of the Gospel, by the unprofitable Speculations of a dangerous Curiosity. 'Tis enough for Christians, that, whatever be the Decree of Predestination, yet these Certain Truths are left us for our Comfort and Encouragement; First, That none shall want sufficient Grace for their Salvation. Secondly, That none shall be Damn'd, but by their own fault. Lastly, That 'tis in our own power to be Sav'd, if we

we will. Theſe Truths, which Faith has render'd Infallible to us, are enough to ſilence Curioſity, and to oblige us to a laborious Diligence, in purſuing thoſe Ways and Means, which God has ordain'd for the obtaining Happineſs: This will make ſure, what is now in doubt, and place thoſe that follow the Advice amongſt the number of the Elect. This one thing, O God, I ask of thee, that neither Sloth, Self-love, or the love of any worldly Thing; may take me out of this way, which thou haſt manifeſted to be thy Will. Thou haſt been infinitely Merciful in Calling me: Grant I may be ever found cloath'd in a Nuptial Robe, that ſo being admited to the Banquet, I may never be caſt out for my Unworthineſs.

Twentieth Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL,

Joh. C. 4. V. 46. ends V. 53.

HEaring *that Jeſus was come from* Jury *into* Galilee, *he went to him, and ask'd him to go down, and heal his Son,* This

This whole Gospel is the Relation of a Miracle, wrought by Christ, upon the Son of this Ruler, who made this Petition to him. The Sickness of his Son was that, which carried him to Christ; and thus, that which he lamented as his Misfortune at home, was the first Step to his Happiness. The peaceable Enjoyment of what we love is the general wish of all; and measuring Happiness by the Maxims of Self-love and the World, we then think all goes well, when the Success answers our wishes. But our Blindness and Corruption being such, that we generally abuse present Blessings, and in our Enjoyments lay the Seeds of Eternal Misery, either by the Forgetfulness of God, and the Life to come, or by making them the Subject of Criminal Excesses; this often obliges God, if he has yet Mercy left for us, to interrupt our present Peace, and by what we call Afflictions, put us in the way of preventing our being Eternally Miserable.

This is the Design of Providence, in mixing the Sweets of this Life with Bitterness; that the Christian Soul, being taught by Disappointments, may raise up his Desires towards a more lasting Happiness, and by the uncertainties of Changeable Goods, learn to seek for a State, which

which is Unchangeable. The Example then of this Ruler going to Chriſt, when he ſaw his Son now at the point of Death, ought to be an Inſtruction to Chriſtians, to make a like uſe of all Afflictions. His Sick Son carried him to Chriſt; their Afflictions ought to carry them to the ſame Refuge. Then it is, inſtead of yeilding to any Sullen or Complaining Paſſion, they ought to conclude all Wordly Satisfactions to be vain, condemn their paſt Folly, in building upon a Foundation, that could not bear, reſolve upon preventing the like Miſcarriage, by the Diſcretion of a more moderate Spirit, and at preſent ſeek Comfort there, where is no danger of the like Uncertainty. By this way all Misfortunes and preſent Uneaſineſs would lead to an Eternal Good, and Heaven would be the Fruit of Unhappineſs.

And how happy would Chriſtians be, if they could come to the Practice of this Leſſen! And how unwiſe, if they do not daily ſtudy it! Misfortunes come frequent in this Life to thoſe, who are beſt fenc'd againſt them; others meet them oftner; ſome live amongſt them, and none can pretend to an Exemption. And muſt it not then be a notorious Indiſcretion in them; not to learn

learn the Practice of that, which comes so often in their way: Which, if once learnt, might be so much for their Present Ease, and Eternal Advantage; and the want of it must be the certain Encrease of Present Misery, and put them in hazard of that which is Everlasting? Is not this a parallel Folly to theirs, who being in want of Bread, and all Necessaries, and having a certain Coin in their Possession, which might abundantly supply them in their present Necessities, and secure them against future Poverty, should go on smarting under their Wants, and lose all the Benefit of what they have in their Hands, because they will not be so industrious, as to know the Value of what they have, and enquire how to put it off? The Case is the same, and too plain for Christians to consider, without Reproach and Confusion.

What therefore are they to do? They are to consider every trouble, of whatever kind it be, as a Monitor or Messenger, which bids them go to Christ, first, to seek his Help, as this Ruler did, pressing their Petition to him with an Earnestness like his; and with such Perseverance, as, again like him, not to be discourag'd, if they seem to be rejected, and in the Continuance of the Evil

vil, ſee nothing but Motives of Deſpair; becauſe Prayer and Faith in ſuch dejecting Circumſtances, moſt powerfully prevail with God for their Relief.

But their principal way of then going to Chriſt, ought to be in the Endeavours of coming near him, in the Reſemblance of his Spirit and Life. He, who had all things in his Power, made choice of the Croſs, and his Life was a Preparation to it, in all manner of Sufferings, Contempts and Humiliations; and ſince it is the Honour of a Diſciple to follow the Steps of his Maſter, it ought to be their Endeavours, when God puts them in the Circumſtances, to be contented, and even pleas'd, that they are in the State of their Maſter, that is, in a State of Suffering, in a State, which ſeparates them from the Enjoyments of Life, and renders them miſerable and Contemptible, in regard of this World.

This Diſpoſition they ought to ſtrengthen in their Hearts, by the Conſideration, that God being Infinite in his Eſſential Perfections, and likewiſe in the Bleſſings beſtowed on them, all Honour, Praiſe, Adoration, and Happineſs, are due to him alone; but that they being nothing but Imperfection, Corruption and Miſery; that they have committed

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Infinite Offences, and are ſtill expos'd to as many more, if not prevented by Grace; what can be due to them, but only to be made the Scorn of Mind, to ſuffer Affronts Diſgraces, Diſtempers of Mind and Body, Darkneſs, Oppreſſions; to be afflicted and perſecuted by all Creatures, as Executioners of the Divine Juſtice? This is what they muſt acknowledge their due; and muſt not then the love of Juſtice ſo far prevail upon all Natural Inclinations, as to oblige them to ſubmit to the Execution of it, and even to make them rejoice in the Occaſions of being brought to the lively Senſe of their Miſery, and of being more Humble and Abject in their own Eyes?

Whilſt therefore it muſt be acknowledg'd an Effect of Impatience and Pride, immoderately to grieve or complain under Troubles; a more peaceable Submiſſion muſt be the Fruit of an humble Spirit, ſuch as, ſenſible of its own unworthineſs, is willing to make a Sacrifice of all to God, and is therfore pleas'd in the Opportunity of doing it. And this being the Spirit, which approaches towards that of Chriſt, it is in this manner, when troubles afflict, Chriſtians ought to uſe their beſt Endeavours for coming as near him, as they can.

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If they find a difficulty in it, as it must necessarily be to corrupt Nature, let them consider it, as an unhappy Infirmity, which stands in need of Christ's help, and therefore go to him in behalf of themselves, and sollicite for their Cure. Let it be one part of their daily Prayers, to beg of God a Patient and Humble Spirit, that they may bear all Troubles in the Spirit of Christ. And if any present Dejection makes them suspect all their Prayers as fruitless, and that God will not hear them, let them look on this Ruler, and take Courage from the Mercy shew'd to him. He made his Address, 'tis true, to Christ, but with how great Imperfections; whilst he presses for the Heath of his Son, and is not concern'd for his Soul; while he demands a Miracle for his Cure, has a false Idea, of the Omnipotence of God, and is yet weak in Faith! And yet with these Imperfections, Christ favours his Petition, and not only heals his Son, as he was ask'd, but adds to this a much greater Mercy, in giving the Life of Faith to him and his whole Family.

May not Christians hence learn to raise their hopes above what they see in themselves, by grounding their Confidence on the Infinite Goodness of God, who knows how to give, not only more than we ask

but

but likewiſe beyond all we can poſſibly deſerve? Could we pray without Imperfections, it would be a great Temptation to Pride, and to confide too much in our ſelves: But as it is, having done our beſt, we have nothing wherein to truſt, but in God alone, and that is, where it ſhould be. And ſince we ſee our Imperfections do not obſtruct his Merces, tho' we are always bound to lament our Weakneſſes, and ſincerely labour to overcome them, yet they ought to be no Motive to us of Deſpair, ſince our Hope is not to be proportion'd to what is in us, but to what is in God. Upon this Foundation are Chriſtians to perſevere in Prayer, even when the diſcouraging Suggeſtions of a Melancholly or DejectedSpirit tells them, that God will not hear, and to practice the Leſſon of *Abraham*'s Faith, by hoping even againſt hope; that is, when Darkneſs lets them ſee no grounds of Hope; and this is the Hope of Faith. Thus, O God, has thy Mercy taught us to reſt with Confidence in Thee. May this Confidence, O Jeſus, ſupport me under all Afflictions, that when theſe hang with a heavy weight upon my Spirit, I may ſtill find Comfort in Thee. May I then ſeek and run to Thee with moſt earneſtneſs, when I want Thee moſt; and tho' I

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know my ſelf many ways imperfect, yet permit me not, I beſeech Thee, to indulge my Imperfections, nor live in thy Diſpleaſure by wilful Sin, and then nothing ſhall deſtroy that Hope I ought to have in Thee.

Twenty-firſt Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL,

Mat. C. 18. V. 23. to the end.

ONE *was brought to him, that ow'd him Ten Thouſand Talents.* In the Perſon of the Servant, mention'd in this Parable, thus deeply endebted to his King, are repreſented to us, not only great and ſcandalous Sinners, but all men in general; ſo that there is no Perſon, who ought not to acknowledge himſelf, thus ſtanding Charg'd with infinite Debts in regard of God. For the end of the Parable being to make all ſenſible of the Obligation they have, of remitting or pardoning whatever others are endebted to them; and this being general, the reaſon here brought by Chriſt for preſſing them to it, muſt

muſt be underſtood ſo too: That is, that if God would treat us, according to the rigour of Juſtice, he has a Right of Charging us with Infinite Faults. And that this Sentiment may be ſincere, it cannot be unſeaſonable, on this Day, to make Reflection on ſome general Heads, which may convince Chriſtians of the number of their Sins, or rather ſhew them to be without number.

Firſt then, for Example, how many are the Sins of every one in particular, in their Time ſpent unprofitably; whilſt that, which was granted by God, for working out their Salvation, has been prodigally waſted in vain Amuſements, which, if no otherwiſe Evil, have diverted the Mind, at leaſt, from better Thoughts; ſince the more it is buſied in what is vain, the leſs Sollicitous it is in what is neceſſary?

Secondly, How many are the Sins, by letting Paſſion have the Influence in what they do, and not Reaſon; in acting for themſelves, without referring what they do to God; or being carried on by the Motive of ſome private Intereſt, and not of Juſtice?

Thirdly, How many, in vain, indiſcreet and unprofitable Words, ſeeking to pleaſe Men, to gain their Eſteem, or to leſſen

leſſen others, and this how often under the cover of pretended Piety or Charity?

Fourthly, How many, in ſecret Scandals given to their Neighbour, by imprinting in his Mind the Image of their Paſſions and falſe Judgments; and by carrying on Diſcourſes before him, not Proportion'd to his Circumſtances, but weakning his Soul, and diſpoſing it to Sin?

Fifthly, How many, by the Omiſſion of many Opportunities of advancing in Virtue, and doing Good to their Neighbour; and this occaſion'd by Sloth, Neglect, Affection, or ſome other Paſſion, which over-rules in ſuch Caſes?

Sixthly, How many, by Ingratitude under the daily Bleſſings of God, whilſt they acknowledge the Mercy no more, than if they were their due?

Seventhly, How many, by the Neglects, Irreverence and Diſtractions, mix'd with their Prayers, ariſing from their Paſſions not ſubdued?

Eighthly, How many, by abuſing the Grace of God, his Sacaments, his Truths and Inſtructions, which he gives them in a Thouſand different Ways?

Ninthly, How many, by the ill uſe of the Chaſtiſements God ſends them, when, inſtead of Diſcharging the Old Debts, as they

they ought, they Contract New Ones by their Impatience?

Laſtly, How many, even in the good Actions they do, by the Human Reſpects beginning and carrying them on, and by the Pride, too often following, accompanied with the Contempt of others? And if there be reaſon to be apprehenſive on the Account of what is eſteem'd Virtue, how much more is there to fear, upon the account of the Evil, to which all are ſubject?

This then being the confeſs'd State of all Chriſtians, what muſt they do under this weighty Charge, but have recourſe to the Patience of God? *Patientiam habe*: And without having any Confidence in themſelves, or in any Compenſation they can make by pretended good Works, caſt themſelves wholly upon the Goodneſs of God, and ſo hope to move him to Mercy; this Senſe of their Poverty, accompanied with proportion'd Humility, being moſt powerful for this end, and the beſt Expedient for Sinners to find Comfort under the weight of their Iniquities?

But are they not to add to this Petition, the Promiſe made by his Servant; *Have Patience*; *and I will pay thee all*? 'Tis certain, Sinners ought to claim no Right to the Grace of God, but depend wholly on the

the Pure Mercy of God. But at the ſame time, they are to have a ſincere Deſire of ſatisfying the Juſtice of God offended, by Works of Penance, which they ought to reſolve to do all their Lives. This Deſire, and this Will, has nothing of Preſumption, becauſe it places no other Value in ſuch Works, but what they have from their Union with the Merits of Jeſus Chriſt. They are to deſire therefore to make Satisfaction to God; not in pretending to offer him a Price ſufficient of it ſelf, and as ſeparate from the Merits of Jeſus Chriſt for the Diſcharge of their Debt; but in obſerving the Law, which they knew God has eſtabliſh'd; to wit, That all Sins are to be puniſh'd by the Juſtice, either of God, or of the Penitent Sinner. 'Tis true, the greateſt Penances a Sinner can undertake, are not in the leaſt capable, of themſelves, for cancelling Sin, but only thro' the Merits of Jeſus Chriſt; but Jeſus Chriſt applies the Price of his Blood, only to thoſe, who are in a Diſpoſition of doing ſerious Penance: *Niſi Penitentiam egeritis, omnes ſimiliter peribitis: If you do not Penance, you ſhall all likewiſe periſh.* This is a Means ordain'd by God, for partaking of the Blood of Jeſus Chriſt, and for obtaining of him the Remiſſion of Sins. There can be no Preſumption then in ſubmitting to this

this Law; but it must be a great one, to dispense with it; since 'tis making void, in great part, the end of Christ's Passion, who, as St. *Paul* says, suffer'd for us, leaving us an Example, that we may follow his Steps; and who can justifie the not following them, or plead for an exemption, but by setting up against him in what he has propos'd, ordain'd and commanded?

In practising therefore this Penance thus requir'd for the payment of their Debts, Christians do no less depend on their only Support, the Mercy of God; because they have no hope of Grace for performing such Penance, but from the Divine Mercy: God dispenses not with their payment; but gives them wherewith to pay; and hence the Will of not paying is Essentially contrary to the Remission of Sins: Upon which grounds it is the Church has declar'd *Satisfaction* to be one part of the Sacrament of Penance. The occasion therefore of the Opposition some make against this Doctrine, is, because they do not distinguish Penitential Works, from the Price and Value of such Works. They imagine, God demands not the Fruits of Penance, because there is nothing, but the Merits of Christ, which has proportion to the greatness of our Sins;

Sins; but do not conſider, that tho', in effect, the Pardon of Sin is not obtain'd, but by the Blood of Chriſt, and the ſole Graces of God, yet that theſe Merits and Grace are applied to Men by certain Means, which are enliven'd by Grace, and have their whole Price and Value from the Merits of Chriſt. We acknowledge, with them, that Chriſt's Blood makes entire Satisfaction to the Juſtice of God; but 'tis our Buſineſs ſtill, by Works of Charity and Penance, to have this in particular applied to us. What therefore we are to fear, is not, that we ſhall not have wherewith to pay our Debts, but rather, that we ſhall neglect the Opportunities of doing it, which God puts into our Hands; as we ſee in the Servant here mention'd, refuſing to releaſe the inconſiderable Debt, which his Companion ow'd him.

In which paſſage is plainly demonſtrated, that the Mercy of God, and Infinite Merits of Chriſt's Paſſion, will avail us nothing, except we, by a Charitable Condeſcendence, forgive every one our Neighbour, whatever Offences he has committed againſt us; and what is requir'd, is not only to forgive him in Words, or in Appearance, but ſincerly from our Hearts. This being a Condition ſo expreſly requir'd by Chriſt, for obtaining Pardon of our

our Sins, is it not our Common Intereſt, to ſee that we find no pretexts for diſpenſing with it, that ſo, when we come to appear before our Lord, we may not have the Terrour of our whole Debt, which we ſuppos'd forgiven, ſtanding in full againſt us? Let thoſe then conſider it, who ſay, they cannot forgive ſuch Injuries and Provocations: And thoſe too, who ſay, they have forgiven, and yet cannot ſpeak peaceably to the Parties concern'd, ſpeak ever peeviſhly of them, put the worſt Conſtruction on all that belongs to them, are pleas'd in the ill Opinion others have of them, and in all that happens to make them uneaſie: Theſe are ill Symptoms, enough to ſuſpect, that Gall and Bitterneſs ſtill lye at the Heart: And have not they then reaſon to give no reſt to themſelves, till they have brought all into a more ſettled and ſincere Peace; ſince they have here the Aſſurance, that if they forgive not their Neighbours from their Hearts, they muſt expect no peace with God? Thus O Jeſus, thou haſt taught us and ſince we cannot doubt of the Truth, grant we may have ſuch a Senſe of the multitude of our own Sins, and of the Mercy we want, as to be Sollicitous in obtaining it; and that we may never be ſo perverſly blind, as to exclude our ſelves from

from the Mercy thou offer'ſt, by being unmerciful to our Brethren, and turning away thy Pardon from us, by refuſing to pardon them.

Twenty-ſecond Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL,

Mat. C. 22. V. 15. ends V. 21.

GIVE *to God, the things that are God's.* They are the Words of Chriſt in anſwer to the Phariſees, who deſigning to ſurprize him, by rendring him odious, either to the Prince, or to the People, are ſilenc'd in the Diſappointment of their Malice, and ſent away with this Fundamental Principle, by which they are reproach'd of their Wickedneſs; and in particular of the Method, at this time undertaken, for effecting what they propos'd. For if what belongs to God is to be render'd to him, what Judgment muſt they make of themſelves, who being Men of Parts and Learning, employ'd not theſe Gifts in the Service of God the Giver, by ſeeking Truth, and giving it Authority amongſt

the Ignorant, but by contriving ways to oppose it, being industrious by false Constructions to render it less discernable, and here summoning all their Craft, to undermine him, who came to teach it for the Salvation of Men?

Observe but their Address to Christ; *Master*, say they, *we know thou art True, and teacheſt the way of God in Truth; thou haſt no regard to any one, nor conſider'ſt the Perſon of Men.* Nothing could be more Artificially laid for gaining their End, than these pretended Applauses, which are ever most effectual for giving a more than usual Confidence, and drawing from Persons thus rais'd up in their own Opinion, Rash or Indiscreet Truths; and tho' the Infinite Wisdom, they attack'd, was not thus to be brought into a Snare, yet the Principle he advanc'd might have made them sensible of their Injustice, in thus prostituting their best Abilities to the Service of their Passion; which being the Effects of God's Goodness to them, ought to have been render'd again to him, in the Fruits of Piety, Charity and Justice.

In this way then were the Pharisees condemn'd, for not rendring to God, the things that are God's; and I wish they had the enclosure of this Guilt; but there

there are Grounds to ſuſpect it of a larger Extent, ſince to abuſe the Accompliſhments of Nature, and Bleſſings of Induſtry, by promoting an Intereſt, contrary to God, who is the Author of them, is ſo common amongſt profeſs'd Chriſtians, that they ſeem not at all concern'd in this Principle of Juſtice, of giving to God what belongs to him.

As for the very Fact of the Phariſees, it has been tranſmitted down to our days, by the like Practice of evil Chriſtians, who in all Ages have endeavour'd not only to eclipſe the Truth, but, by all the Contrivances of Art and Study, have labour'd to make it odious, and prevent its being diſcover'd by ſuch, whoſe Sincerity has put them upon ſeeking it. And what Plea have they had to juſtifie their Proceedings, but ſuch as carry'd on the Phariſees; their not ſeeing the Truth? But what put the Blind on their Eyes, but only permitting their Judgments to be corrupted by Paſſion, Intereſt and Ambition, and turning all that Induſtry, in finding ways to obſcure it, which ſhould have been employ'd in ſeeking it? Learning is a great Help, when it has Charity and Sincerity for its Guides; but if theſe are laid by, it only ſerves to make more Skilful Artiſts againſt Truth, and to undertake

dertake the Management of this great Injuſtice, in robbing God of what belongs to him.

This ſame Injuſtice is practis'd in a more offenſive way, by thoſe, whoſe Education, and Natural Abilities, give them many Advantages over their Neighbours; and the general Subject, in which they exerciſe them in publick, is either in ridiculing all Religion, or in advancing Arguments of Reaſon ſo far, as to expoſe all thoſe Myſteries, which are not the Conſequence of ſuch Principles. And where Impiety is ſomething more Modeſt, tho' ſuch Perſons ſpare the Fundamentals, yet how often do they exerciſe their Wits, in Raileries, againſt all thoſe, whoſe Exemplar Piety is a Reproach to their Scandalous Liberties, and in their jeering Attacks againſt the Stricter Profeſſors of a Goſpel Life? And of thoſe, who are not bold enough for this, are not there ſtill many, who abuſe the Words of Life, in making the Holy Scripture the Subject of their Jeſts, and give their Prophane Turns to this, when 'tis to ſet forth their own Wit, or entertain their Company. Now how far is this from giving to God what is his; when thoſe Gifts, with which he has bleſs'd all theſe, are no ways return'd

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to him, but made the Unhappy Occaſions of more plauſibly offending him?

Many others follow after theſe, tho' at ſome diſtance, who ſhew their Wit in expoſing their Neighbours Actions, their Overſights and Indiſcretions; in painting out their own Worldly Paſſions in ſuch charming Colours, as to gain Admirers, and invite to Imitation; in applauding their Neighbours Weakneſſes, and by hurtful Flatteries, encouraging ſuch Methods of Raſhneſs, Prodigality, Vanity and Folly, which in their Conſcience they diſapprove, and Charity obliges them to condemn; in ſtudied or affected ways of magnifying themſelves, and drawing all Subjects to their own Commendation. Infinite other Methods there are of this kind, by which Chriſtians abuſe the beſt Gifts of God; and inſtead of referring them to him, by making them ſerviceable to his Glory, to the Cauſe of Virtue, to their own or Neighbour's Spiritual Good, turn them all againſt him, in ſetting up an Intereſt contrary to what they profeſs, in being Followers of the Goſpel, and to all they have undertaken at the Font, when they were liſted amongſt the Adopted Children of God.

This hitherto touches only thoſe, who have not the Buſineſs of the World upon them;

them; but if we turn towards them, who are under these Engagements, the same Charge, I fear, will be generally found standing in force against them. For if we observe Men of Business, who have any Advantage above their Neighbours, either in Health, Strength, Capacity or Parts, what is the Use, they make of these Gifts? I wish I could say with Truth, that by the help of these, they are better Advocates of Justice and Truth, are more exemplar in Virtue; are more zealous in reforming publick Injustice, and Scandals; are more Industrious in promoting what is for the Good of Church or State; but this is rather Wish than Fact; for besides some few, who are distinguish'd by these particular Characters, 'tis but too evident, the greater number turn these Blessings quite another way; that is, bend all their Natural Abilities, either to raise themselves higher in this World; to gain Riches and Places of Command; to contrive Ways for imposing on, and over-reaching their Neighbour; to be more Artificial Deceivers, more Ingenious Cheats; to exempt themselves from Publick Service; to oppress the Poor with more Security, to make Advantage of others Misfortunes; an last of all, to be provided with sufficient Means for living

living an Idle, Vain and Extravagant Life.

This is the general Method of Worldly Men; this the Employment of whatever Talents God has entruſted in their Hands; ſo that inſtead of employing them in the Service of God, and Eternity, they have confin'd their Trade wholly to this World: And this ſome do ſo remarkably, as even to be ſtupidly Ignorant, as to all things belonging to God, and their Souls, whilſt in Buſineſs of their private Intereſt, they have Cuning enough to manage againſt the Wiſeſt, without any Danger of being worſted: And others again are remarkable in another way, whilſt they not only ſeek this World, but even make uſe of that Sincerity and Candor of Temper, which God has given them, for gaining Credit to their Knavery; which others ſtill carry farther, in Counterfeiting Piety and Conſcience, that, under this Cover, they may deceive without Suſpicion.

In theſe ſeveral Ways, Chriſtians join with the Phariſees in robbing God of his due, and not rendring to God the things that are God's. And beſides theſe, if other Chriſtians, who may preſume themſelves here not concern'd, would look in to their Accounts, and ſee, what is the uſe of all they have receiv'd, of Time,

Health, Estate, of Natural Abilities, and Acquir'd Accomplishments, with all the Opportunities of doing good, which God puts into their Hands, I cannot but think they will discover so much Waste and Injustice in the Abuse of such Blessings, that when they shall be call'd to an Acconnt, and all is to be Stated by this Principle, of rendring to God the things that are God's, they will have reason to suspect the Decision of their Eternal Lot. O God, I confess I have reason to fear this, when I look back upon my past years; and therefore will not think of justifying my self, but only of seeking my defence in thy Mercy: Pardon me therefore, I beseech thee, all my past Injustices, and forgive me all my Iniquities; and now, from this time, give me Grace to consider all thy Gifts; not how I may make an Advantage of them, as to this World, but the Purposes, for which thou hast given them, and the Use thou expectest from me. This Grace, O God, is the greatest Comfort I desire here; and 'tis this only can give me Comfort at my last Hour, when thou shalt summon me to render the Account of all that I have receiv'd.

Twenty-third Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL,

Mat. C. 9. V. 18. ends V. 26.

A *Certain Ruler came and ador'd him, ſaying, Lord, my Daughter is now dead.* The Subject of the preſent Goſpel are two Miracles, one wrought by Chriſt upon a Woman, in the Cure of a dangerous Diſtemper; the other upon the Daughter of this Chief of the Synagogue, who here made his Petition to him. In both theſe is figur'd the unhappy State of Sinners, one of them having been labouring under a tedious Diſtemper of many Years, and the other being quite Dead; and tho' the one being reſtor'd to Health, and the other to Life by Chriſt, be Demonſtration enough, that there is no kind of Sin, which may not find Remedy in him; yet while we ſee the Woman here mention'd, had been many Years ſeeking Cure in following Phyſicians; without finding it; and new Life of the other is ſo far deſpair'd of that the Propoſal is receiv'd with Mockery

and Scorn, and no leſs than a Miracle, from the Immediate Preſence, and Omnipotent Power of Chriſt, is neceſſary for their help. The Comfort here given to Sinners has a very great Allay, in the Motives given for their concluding, That if their Eſtate be of wilful Sin, under the continuance of Years, ſuch as renders them quite dead to God, it has ſo much of Deſpair in it, that upon following the beſt Spiritual Phyſicians, they may ſeek for Health a long time, and not find it at laſt; except Chriſt, by his extraordinary and miraculous Power, ſhall come in to their Aſſiſtance. And if they look on themſelves, have they not more reaſon to Deſpair, than hope for this Priviledge? For what Motives can they have to think, that God ſhall ſignalize his Favours to them by Miracles, who have liv'd ſo long in Rebellion againſt him; and had no regard either to his Judgments or Mercies?

This makes the Caſe of Habitual Sinners to be almoſt deſperate; but who has brought them into this unhapy State? It is the Fruit of their own Wickedneſs, and they muſt bear the Burthen of it. But however they are not to deſpair, ſince Miracles may help them; if there be no Grounds in themſelves for ſuch unde-

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ſerved Help, let them build this Hope on the Goodneſs and Mercies of God, which are infinite, and have here given Inſtances of their Power. Why were theſe Miracles wrought, but to prove the Miſſion of Chriſt, and to encourage diſtreſs'd Souls to ſeek for Comfort and Cure in him? But then, ought not thoſe, who deſire this Relief, put themſelves in the Diſpoſitions of theſe, who here met with ſuch Succeſs? For if they do not labour in this, their Hope will be rather a Temptation, than Virtue, and haſten Death, inſtead of preparing for a Cure.

Hence I can have but little Confidence in their Method, who, ſenſible of the great Diſorder of their Souls, and of the dangerous Infirmities, under which they labour, upon a preſent deſire of Amendment, make a haſty Preparation for the Acknowledgment of their Sins, and then running to the Table of our Lord, conclude their Peace to be made, and that now they are in the State of Health and Innocence. For tho' theſe Sacred Ordinances are, by a Divine Virtue, powerful Reſtoratives of Health, yet, like the beſt Medicines, they cannot be expected to do Good, but where the Patients, by ſuitable Preparations, fit themſelves for receiving the Benefit of them. If therefore theſe

Sinners

Sinners, touch'd with the Senſe of their Iniquities, and with the deſire of a Better State, would, by Penitential Exerciſes, firſt truly humble themſelves in their own Eyes, as to judge themſelves unworthy of appearing in the preſence of God; if inſtead of thruſting in amongſt thoſe Gueſts, whoſe better Life fits them for the Holy Banquet, they would judge an Excluſion from that Priviledge more becoming their Condition, and be contented to be in their Father's Houſe, not as Children, but as Servants: If they would thus, not only humble themſelves, with this diſtreſs'd Woman, but likewiſe raiſe their Hearts, by a lively Faith and Confidence in God; if they would lay open their Neceſſities with the Holy Importunity of this Ruler, approach to Chriſt with his Adoration and Hope; from ſuch Preparations might be expected all the Help they deſire and want; for 'tis only on theſe Conditions, Sinners are encourag'd to hope for Mercy, and by theſe ways the Goſpel teaches them to ſeek it. But if they ſtep over them, contenting themſelves with that, which, without theſe, is only the Form of Repentance, they may eaſily have the Form of Abſolution without the Effect; and return from the Tribunal of Mercy, with

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all the Guilt they brought with them, beſides the addition of Sacriledge and Prophanation to their former Sins.

And becauſe few of thoſe Sinners, here concern'd, make due Reflection upon this Preparation, and fewer take pains in accompliſhing it; hence, I cannot but fear, That while great Numbers croud, with the Multitude, about Chriſt, they are not many, who, like the Infirm Woman, touch him, ſo as to find the Effect of his Preſence, This muſt be the Effect of a Particular Grace; and, O God, how few are they, who, by the Exerciſes of true Humility and Penance, put themſelves in the Diſpoſition of obtaining this Favour from thy Hands!

Wherefore it muſt certainly be concluded the great Concern of all Chriſtians, to prevent their coming into this unhappy State, which has ſo much Danger in it, and ſo many Difficulties in being deliver'd from it. What therefore are they to do, but obſerve the ſame Method, as to their Spiritual, which Diſcretion teaches them as to their Corporal Health? Thoſe, who are ſollicitous to eſcape Habitual Diſtempers, obſerve Order in all the Concerns of Life, both as to Eating, Drinking, Sleeping, Buſineſſes and Divertiſements, avoid all Extremities of Heats

Heats and Colds, and upon any Symptoms of a Diſorder appearing, endeavour, by ſeaſonable Care, to prevent its coming to a Head. In the ſame manner are Chriſtians to proceed: They are to be ſtrict in obſerving Order and Diſcipline in all they do, as to the Affairs both of Body and Soul; they are to admit nothing that is Immoderate; and upon diſcovering an eagerneſs in any one Paſſion, which is the Symptom of an approaching Diſeaſe, are forthwith to ſet a Watch upon it, and by timely endeavours ſtrive to bring it into due Subjection.

By this way, tho' it will not cut off all Failings, and Sins of Surprize or Paſſion, yet there will no Opportunity be given for any of them to become immoderate, or grow into a Cuſtom; and ſo the moſt dangerous Diſtempers will be prevented. But here is the Misfortune; too many are poſſeſs'd with a Principle, That little Diſorders can do but little Harm; and hence they ſay, what need of being exact to Hours of Prayer, of Eating or Sleeping? What Harm can there be in neglecting ſuch Order? What if we love Company, Gaming, take ſome liberties in Drinking, Converſation, &c. 'tis in ſuch a moderate way, that nothing, but ſcrupulous Nicety can cenſure it? I would

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ſay the ſame with them, did I not ſee theſe little Diſorders bring on inſenſibly the worſt of Diſtempers; and that, by ſuch inconſiderable things neglected, there is made, by degrees, a Familiarity with the blackeſt Crimes. It may ſeem little to neglect Order in the Diſcipline of Life; but let them ſhew me, where this is the practice of any time, without being follow'd with Notorious Irregularities. It may ſeem inconſiderable, not to be exact in the time of Riſing in the Morning, in Praying, and Reading, or Speaking the rigorous Truth; but let them tell me, where ſuch Liberties are uſually taken, but where they are follow'd with greater? And whether it be not from ſuch Seeds, that the Devil makes his Harveſt in the Fruit of all Iniquity.

If this then be the uſual Progreſs of Sin, as moſt certainly it is, what can be more adviſable for Chriſtians, than to be watchful in theſe Points, which are eſteem'd but inconſiderable, as the moſt effectual Means for avoiding the dangerous State of an Habitual Indiſpoſition of Soul, from which ſo very few recover? Grant, O God, to all that profeſs thy Name, this Wiſdom, by which they may be deliver'd from the Snares of a Powerful and Subtle Enemy, who by cover'd Ways, and undiſcern'd

diſcern'd Contrivances, obtains the poſſeſſion of infinite Souls. Make me always watchful againſt him, and never to walk on confident of being ſecure, where ſo many, like my ſelf, have begun, and gone on blindly into the Depth of Vice. And as for all thoſe, who are now in this unhappy ſtate, give them a Senſe of their Miſery, and Grace, whereby they may be reſcued from it, that not contenting themſelves with the Ceremonies of a Superficial Repentance, they may lay the Ax to the Root, and, as thou commandeſt, ſeek thy Mercy, by bringing forth worthy Fruits of Penance.

Twenty-fourth Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL,

Mat. C. 24. V. 15. ends V. 35.

WHen *you ſhall ſee the Abomination of Deſolation, ſtanding in the Holy Place,* —*then let thoſe, who are in* Judea, *flee to the Mountains.* The Advice given by Chriſt in this Goſpel, is principally in regard either of the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem* by *Titus*,

tus, or of the laſt Perſecution of the Church by Antichriſt. The Miſeries of Beſieg'd *Jeruſalem* make no great impreſſion now, becauſe they are paſt. And the Deſolation of the Church by Antichriſt gives not any Alarm, becauſe it ſeems ſo far off: But why are we not mov'd with the preſent Signs of God's Anger, which ſeems provok'd againſt us? The Marks given to the Faithful by Chriſt, as pointing out the time, when the Divine Wrath ſhould diſcharge it ſelf upon *Jeruſalem*, was when they ſhould ſee *Abomination ſtanding in the Holy Place.* The Prophanation of Holy Things, is both a Mark and Effect of God's Anger: And if the Believers were then directed to retire out of *Jeruſalem*, and ſeek ſhelter in the Mountains, when they ſhould obſerve this Mark, that ſo they might not be made a part of the Common Ruin; have not Chriſtians ſufficient reaſon to conſider, whether they do not obſerve at preſent Signs of the Divine Wrath, enough to oblige them to fear God's Judgments, and to think of providing for their own Security?

Let them but take a paſſing review of the Prophanation of all Holy Things; of the very Altar, by the Unexemplar and Scandalous Lives of Eccleſiaſticks; of the Temple,

Temple, by the great Irreverence of the Faithful; of Holy Orders, by being made a ſtep to Dignities and Riches; of a Religious Life, by the many Abuſes and Liberties, with which it is corrupted; of the Sacraments, by thoſe, who unworthily approach to them; of the Word of God, by ſuch as pervert it for the ſupport of their Errors; of God's moſt Holy Name, by thoſe, who unworthily prophane it; of Religion and Piety, by ſuch as carry on the moſt unwarrantable Undertakings under this Cover, and by the ſame, draw in the Credulous to their Party; of God's Will, by Sinners, who contemn it; of his Law, by the ſame, who trample it under their Feet; of his Juſtice, by thoſe, who deſpiſe it; of his Mercy, by ſuch, as in Confidence of this, continue on raſhly in their Wickedneſs.

Such a Conſideration attended with all its Circumſtances, beſides infinite other Branches, may be enough to conclude, That there is truly now Abomination of Deſolation ſtanding in the Holy Place, and that upon this Sign of God's Diſpleaſure, there is reaſon to ſeek Security againſt his Judgments, nay, (without looking farther at preſent) againſt theſe Judgments; his ſevereſt Scourges being not greater

greater Judgments, than this ſo general Corruption; it being part of that Chaſtiſement, with which St. *Paul* ſays, *Rom.* 1. God puniſh'd thoſe Unbelievers, who knowing God, did not glorifie him as God, and therefore were abandon'd by him, and deliver'd up to a Reprobate Senſe, even to their own Infamous Paſſions, and to the Deſires of their now Hearts. This Rigorous Puniſhment now upon ſuch infinite numbers, who knowing God, do not glorifie him as God, but prophane him in all that is Holy, and therefore are deliver'd up to the Corruption of their own Reprobate Senſe, is that which ought to awaken all Obſervers, and oblige them to have recourſe to Chriſt, who is the Mountain, and in whom alone is their Security.

And principally to turn away the Anger of God, and Weight of his Judgments, from the Chriſtian World, by humbling themſelves before him, and endeavouring to move him to Mercy. And yet not ſo, as juſtifying and diſtinguiſhing themſelves from others, as having no part in their Crimes, by which God's Juſtice has been provok'd: For who knows, but they have contributed to it by their Tepidity and Neglects, by their Pride, Ingratitude, and the Abuſe of ſuch Graces,

Graces, as they have receiv'd? Who knows, but the Opinion of their own Virtue is rais'd from the greater Sins of others, in which they do not concur, and that they may connive at many Sins in themſelves, becauſe they ſeem leſs, than what others commit? And may not they hence inſenſibly loſe the Horror of great Offences, accuſtom themſelves to them, not think of bewailing, and much leſs of oppoſing them? Thus then many, who reflect not upon it, may have a great part in the Provocations given to God, and in drawing down his Judgments.

And therefore the better part, even of the Beſt, is to join themſelves with Sinners, humbling themſelves with them, and not confiding in any thing of their own, to build their hopes on the greatneſs of God's Mercy alone; as we ſee practis'd by *Daniel*, who having, without queſtion, the leaſt ſhare in thoſe Sins, which had provok'd God to tranſport the *Jews* into *Babylon*, yet ſeparates not himſelf from others, but joining with them, puts himſelf into the number of thoſe who had provok'd God to Wrath. *We have ſinn'd*, ſays he, *we have committed iniquity, we have departed from thy Commandments, we deſerve Confuſion for our Sins.*—— *'Tis not in Confidence of our own Juſtice, we offer our*

Prayers

Prayers to thee, but of the multitude of thy Mercies. And ſince this Humility of the Prophet was ſo acceptable to God, as to obtain from him a Revelation of the Meſſias, and a promiſe of Liberty for his People, I think Chriſtians cannot have better Encouragement and Direction, as to the general Method they are to take in their Addreſſes to God, for removing his Judgments from his People.

But as to themſelves Chriſt gives this Advice; *He that is on the Houſe-top, let him not go down to take any thing; and he that is in the Field, let him not return to take his Coat.* In which words, he gives Direction to thoſe, who have gain'd any degree of Virtue, not to be prevail'd on by the Conſideration of Worldly Intereſt or Affection, to go back again into the Common Ways of the World, but rather to abandon all that belongs to Earth, for their greater Security againſt the Wrath of God. They, who are Sollicitous to ſave all, hazard all; 'tis therefore more adviſable for them, to let that periſh, which is periſhable, and to confine their Sollicitude to the ſaving that which is Eternal. Whence all thoſe muſt conclude themſelves under a Fatal Miſtake, who think their Salvation muſt coſt them nothing; and for putting themſelves under Covert againſt

againſt the Common Corruptions of the World, will not renounce any part of their Convenience or Intereſt for theſe, who are ſo earneſt in linking their Temporal Affairs to Salvation, are eaſily ſurpriz'd with Ruin, as the *Jews* were, who unwilling to quit their Conveniencies by leaving the City, loſt themſelves by endeavouring to ſave what belong'd to them.

Hence it is, Chriſt pronounces Woes againſt thoſe, who in ſuch Circumſtances, are with Child, or give Suck; that is, againſt ſuch, as are big with Worldly Deſires and Projects, and ſuch, as make their Body the ſole Object of their Care, flattering it, as a Nurſe does her Infant, in all the ways, that can be pleaſing and eaſie to it; becauſe thoſe are ſo bent on this World, and the promiſing Satisfactions of it, that they cannot be perſwaded, Retreat is neceſſary; and therefore go on under all the Deluſions of Self-love and the World, till the Terrors of God's Judgments and Death meets them; when an Eternal Separation muſt be their Puniſhment, for admitting of no Separation before, for turning away the Anger of God from them, and making proviſion for Eternity.

There

There being this difficulty, all have reaſon to pray, as here adviſ'd, *That their flight be not in Winter, or on the Sabbath*; that is, That God will not permit his Judgments, or extraordinary Trials, to fall upon them, at a time, when their Souls are Weak, Barren, Tepid and Dry, when thro' theſe Indiſpoſitions, they ſhall not be prepar'd to flee to the Mountains, and ſeek ſhelter in God: But that he would be ſo Merciful, as to proportion his Grace to the Temptations, that ſhall befall them: For an ordinary degree of Virtue being not ſufficient to ſtand under extraordinary Trials, if he does not thus Mercifully aſſiſt them, they muſt be ſurpriz'd by Ruin. What will an ordinary Humility do, under extraordinary Humiliations, or a Moderate degree of Self-denial, when the greateſt Intereſts are to be renounc'd? And ſince none know the Trials, they have yet to go thro', whether in Life, or as to the manner of Dying, have not all reaſon to make this a part of their daily Prayer, that God would prepare them for all Tribulations, and mercifully ſtand by them in the Day of Diſtreſs?

O God, we are ſenſible of thy Judgments, paſt Ages inſtruct us, preſent Chaſtiſements awaken us, and we have the

Terror

Terror of what is yet to come. We confeſs, our Sins bear a great Part in the Provocation given to thy Juſtice, and at the ſame time acknowledge thy Mercy, in ſhewing us how to eſcape thy Wrath. Perfect this Mercy, we beſeech thee, in us, that at preſent, by a true Humility, we may move thee to moderate thy Scourges, and by a ſincere Converſion to thee, may receive thoſe Graces, which may carry us thro' all Trials, that are yet to come, and direct us ever to thee, by whom alone we can ſubſiſt.

In this are finiſh'd the Inſtructions of the Year; the Deſign of them being my Neighbours good, I have not only propos'd my own Thoughts, but likewiſe borrow'd from others, ſuch as I judg'd proper to anſwer this End; ſo that in many places there is more of Tranſlation than Compoſition in them; this will be no more offenſive to my Neighbour, than it is in his Sickneſs, to be Cur'd by ſuch Medicines, which are not made up by him, who preſcribes them; and 'tis as little injurious to me, who propoſing no more than his good, am as well ſatisfy'd, in effecting it by Helps from anothers Stock, as from my own. I pray God give it this Effect, and in my Neighbour's good I have my End.

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